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AND
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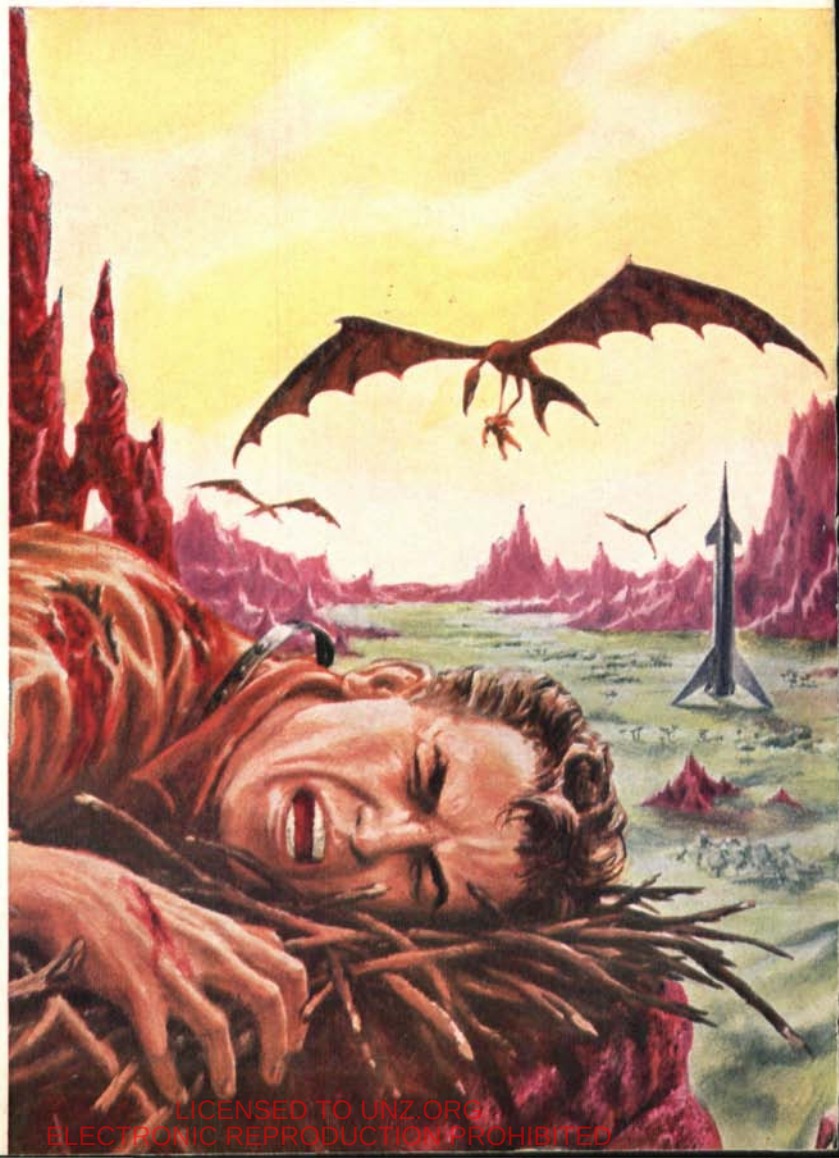

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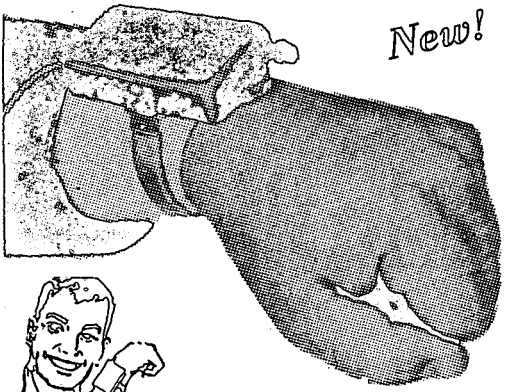

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Galaxy

SCIENCE FICTION

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GALAXY *Science Fiction* is published monthly by Galaxy Publishing Corporation. Main offices: 421 Hudson Street, New York 14, N. Y. 35c per copy. Subscription: (12 copies) $3.50 per year in the United States, Canada, Mexico, South and Central America and U. S. Possessions. Elsewhere $4.50. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office, New York, N. Y. Copyright, New York 1956, by Galaxy Publishing Corporation, Robert Guinn, president. All rights, including translations reserved. All material submitted must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelopes. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited material. All stories printed in this magazine are fiction, and any similarity between characters and actual persons is coincidental.

Printed in the U.S.A. by the Guinn Co., Inc. N. Y. 14, N. Y. Title Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

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AS WE get closer to space travel, people who worry about that sort of thing are trying to devise ways of keeping the crews sane. One way to keep sane, of course, is to get away from people who worry about that sort of thing.

The proposals, like proverbs, all make sense and yet all contradict one another: Lone pilots because more would get on each other's nerves. Several because lone pilots get on their own nerves. Mixed crews to avoid frustration. All-male (sometimes all-female) crews to avoid bloodshed.

I don't think it matters much — provided every member of the crew has a monkey to attend to. If scientific reasons are needed, they can be thought up as fast as the crew catches wise: to test air, temperature, metabolism, food, psychic climate, hard radiation, and so forth.

Naturally, the only motive that matters is to saddle the crew with a monkey apiece.

I derive this solution from my own experience in the Pacific during WW II, when I thought having a monkey would take my mind off things. It did. I was as tied down as a mother of nine.

Baggy (for Baguio, where he was captured) fought furiously against being housebroken, left alone or allowed to be hungry. I almost went broke feeding him, finally outflanked regulations by cutting bananas off a tree in a mined area. That saved pesos. But then Baggy got so sick that he couldn't even work up a decent glare.

I knew then that he was close to death.

But good old Pedro, our native scout, spotted the stalk of bananas I'd liberated and said of course Baggy was sick — I'd been feeding him *male* bananas.

That's the real point here; the sequel may be of interest, but it's not important: Baggy recovered, glare and all, and I sold him to a sailor minutes after checking into a rest camp in Manila, and knew (relative) freedom again. I tried often to find the difference between male and female bananas, never succeeded, which good old Pedro claimed was a matter of Filipino know-how.

Not long ago, I mentioned my puzzlement to Willy Ley. He choked on his cigar and kept choking while he gave me the

(*Continued on page* 87)

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The Man Who Ate the World

In a civilization which flowed with milk and honey — and flowed and flowed and flowed — his tragedy was that he had not drowned at birth!

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By FREDERIK POHL

Illustrated by DOCKTOR

HE HAD a name but at home he was called "Sonny," and he was almost always at home. He hated it. Other boys his age went to school. Sonny would have done anything to go to school, but his family was, to put it mildly, not well off. It was not Sonny's fault that his father was so unsuccessful. But it meant no school for Sonny, no boys of his own age for Sonny to play with. All childhoods are tragic (as all adults forget), but Sonny's was misery all the way through.

The worst time was at night, when the baby sister was asleep and the parents were grimly eating and reading and dancing and drinking, until they were ready to drop. And of all bad nights, the night before his twelfth birthday was perhaps Sonny's worst. He was old enough to know what a birthday party was like.

It would be cake and candy, shows and games.

It would be presents, presents, presents.

It would be a terrible, endless day.

He switched off the color-D television and the recorded tapes of sea chanteys and, with an appearance of absent-mindedness, walked toward the door of his playroom.

Davey Crockett got up from beside the model rocket field and

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said, "Hold on thar, Sonny. Mought take a stroll with you." Davey, with a face as serene and strong as a Tennessee crag, swung its long huntin' rifle under one arm and put its other arm around Sonny's shoulders. "Where you reckon the two of us ought to head?"

Sonny shook Davey Crockett's arm off. "Get lost," he said petulantly. "Who wants you around?"

LONG JOHN SILVER came out of the closet, hobbling on its wooden leg, crouched over its knobby cane. "Ah, young master," it said reproachfully, "you shouldn't ought to talk to old Davey like that! He's a good friend to you, Davey is. Many's the weary day Davey and me has been a-keepin' of your company. I asks you this, young master: Is it fair and square that you should be a-tellin' him to get lost? Is it fair, young master? Is it square?"

Sonny looked at the floor stubbornly and didn't answer. What was the use of answering dummies like them? He stood rebelliously silent and still until he just felt like saying something. And then he said: "You go in the closet, both of you. I don't want to play with you. I'm going to play with my trains."

Long John said unctuously: "Now there's a good idea, that is! You just be a-havin' of a good time with your trains and old Davey and me'll—"

"Go ahead!" shouted Sonny. He kept stamping his foot until they were out of sight.

His fire truck was in the middle of the floor; he kicked at it, but it rolled quickly out of reach and slid into its little garage under the tanks of tropical fish.

He scuffed over to the model railroad layout and glared at it. As he approached, the Twentieth Century Limited came roaring out of a tunnel, sparks flying from its stack. It crossed a bridge, whistled at a grade crossing, steamed into the Union Station. The roof of the station glowed and suddenly became transparent, and through it Sonny saw the bustling crowds of redcaps and travelers—

"I don't want that," he said. "Casey, crack up old Number Ninety-nine again."

Obediently the layout quivered and revolved a half-turn. Old Casey Jones, one and an eighth inches tall, leaned out of the cab of the S.P. locomotive and waved good-by to Sonny. The locomotive whistled shrilly twice and picked up speed—

It was a good crackup. Little old Casey's body, thrown completely free, developed real blisters from the steam and bled real blood. But Sonny turned his back on it. He had liked that crackup

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for a long time — longer than he liked almost any other toy he owned. But he was tired of it.

He looked around the room.

Tarzan of the Apes, leaning against a foot-thick tree trunk, one hand on a vine, lifted its head and looked at him; but Tarzan was clear across the room. The others were in the closet.

Sonny ran out and slammed the door. He saw Tarzan start to come after him, but even before Sonny was out of the room, Tarzan slumped and stood stock-still.

IT wasn't fair, Sonny thought angrily. They wouldn't even *chase* him, so that at least he could have some kind of chance to get away by himself. They'd just talk to each other on their little radios, and in a minute one of the tutors, or one of the maids, or whatever else happened to be handy would vector in on him —

But, for the moment, he was free.

He slowed down and walked along the Great Hall toward his baby sister's room. The fountains began to splash as he entered the hall; the mosaics on the wall began to tinkle music and sparkle with moving colors.

"Now, chile, whut you up to?"

He turned around, but he knew it was Mammy coming toward him. It was slapping toward him on big, flat feet, its pink-palmed hands lifted to its shoulders. The face under the red bandanna was frowning, its gold tooth sparkling as Mammy scolded: "Chile, you is got usns so worried, we's fit to *die!* How you 'speck us to take good keer of you efn you run off lak that? Now you jes come on back to your nice room with Mammy an' we'll see if there ain't some real nice program on the TV."

Sonny stopped and waited for it, but he wouldn't give it the satisfaction of looking at it. Slap-slap the big feet waddled cumbersomely toward him; but he didn't have any illusions. Waddle, big feet, three hundred pounds and all, Mammy could catch him in twenty yards with a ten-yard start. Any of them could.

He said in his best icily indignant voice: "I was just going in to look at my baby sister."

Pause. "You was?" The plump black face looked suspicious.

"Yes, I was. Doris is my own sister and I love her."

Pause—long pause. "Dat's nice," said Mammy, but its voice was still doubtful. "I 'speck I better come 'long with you. You wouldn't want to wake your lil baby sister up. Ef I come, I'll he'p you keep real quiet."

Sonny shook free of it — they were always putting their hands

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on kids! "I don't *want* you to come with me, Mammy!"

"Aw, now, honey! Mammy ain't gwine bother nothin', you knows that!"

Sonny turned his back on it and marched grimly toward his sister's room. If only they would leave him *alone!* But they never did.

It was always that way, always one darn old robot—yes, *robot,* he thought, savagely tasting the naughty word. Always one darn *robot* after another. Why couldn't Daddy be like other daddies, so they could live in a decent little house and get rid of those darn *robots*—so he could go to a real school and be in a class with other boys, instead of being taught at home by Miss Brooks and Mr. Chips and all those other *robots?*

They spoiled everything. And they would spoil what he wanted to do now. But he was going to do it all the same, because there was something in Doris's room that he wanted very much.

It was probably the only tangible thing he wanted in the world.

AS HE [illegible] and Mammy passed the imitation tumbled rocks of the Bear Cave, Mama Bear poked its head out and growled: "Hello, Sonny. Don't you think you ought to be in bed? It's nice and warm in our bear bed, Sonny."

He didn't even look at it. Time was when he had liked that sort of thing, too, but he wasn't a four-year-old like Doris any more. All the same, there was one thing a four-year-old had—

He stopped at the door of her room. "Doris?" he whispered.

Mammy scolded: "Now, chile, you knows that lil baby is asleep! How come you tryin' to wake her up?"

"I won't wake her up." The furthest thing from Sonny's mind was to wake his sister up. He tiptoed into the room and stood beside the little girl's bed. *Lucky kid!* he thought enviously. Being four, she was allowed to have a tiny little room and a tiny bed—while Sonny had to wallow around in a forty-foot bedchamber and a bed eight feet long.

He looked down at his sister. Behind him, Mammy clucked approvingly. "Dat's nice when chilluns loves each other lak you an' that lil baby," it whispered.

Doris was sound asleep, clutching her teddy-bear. It [illegible] slightly [illegible] and opened an eye to look at Sonny, but it didn't say anything.

Sonny took a deep breath, leaned forward and gently slipped the teddy-bear out of the bed.

It scrambled pathetically, trying to get free.

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Mammy whispered urgently: "Sonny! Now you let dat old teddy-bear alone, you heah me?"

Sonny whispered: "I'm not hurting anything. Leave me alone, will you?"

"Sonny!"

He clutched the little furry robot desperately around its middle. The stubby arms pawed at him, the furred feet scratched against his arms. It growled a tiny doll-bear growl, and whined, and suddenly his hands were wet with its real salt tears.

"Sonny! Come on now, honey, you knows that's Doris's Teddy. Aw, chile!"

He said: "It's mine!" It wasn't his. He knew it wasn't. His was long gone, taken away from him when he was six because it was *old,* and because he had been six, and six-year-olds had to have bigger, more elaborate companion-robots. It wasn't even the same color as his — it was brown and his had been black and white. But it was cuddly and gently warm and he had heard it whispering little bedtime stories to Doris. And he wanted it very much.

FOOTSTEPS in the hall outside. A low-pitched pleading voice from the door: "Sonny, you must not interfere with your sister's toys. One has obligations."

He stood forlornly, holding the teddy-bear. "Go away, Mr. Chips!"

"Really, Sonny! This isn't proper behavior. Please return the toy."

"I won't!"

Mammy, dark face pleading in the shadowed room, leaned toward him and tried to take it away from him. "Aw, honey, now you know that's not —"

"Leave me alone!" he shouted. There was a gasp and a little whimper from the bed, and Doris sat up and began to cry.

The little girl's bedroom was suddenly filled with robots — and not only robots, for in a moment the butler appeared, leading Sonny's actual flesh-and-blood mother and father.

Sonny made a terrible scene. He cried, and he swore at them childishly for being the unsuccessful clods they were, and they nearly wept, too, because they were aware that their lack of standing was bad for the children. But he couldn't keep Teddy.

They marched him back to his room, where his father lectured him while his mother stayed behind to watch Mammy comfort the little girl.

His father said: "Sonny, you're a big boy now. We aren't as well off as other people, but you have to help us. Don't you know that, Sonny? We all have to do our part. Your mother and I'll be up

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till midnight now, consuming, because you've made this scene. Can't you at least *try* to consume something bigger than a teddy-bear? It's all right for Doris because she's so little, but a big boy like you—"

"I hate you!" cried Sonny, and he turned his face to the wall.

They punished him, naturally. The first punishment was that they give him an extra birthday party the week following.

The second punishment was even worse.

II

LATER — much, much later, nearly a score of years — a man named Roger Garrick in a place named Fisherman's Island walked into his hotel room.

The light didn't go on.

The bellhop apologized, "We're sorry, sir. We'll have it attended to, if possible."

"If possible?" Garrick's eyebrows went up. The bellhop made putting in a new light tube sound like a major industrial operation. "All right." He waved the bellhop out of the room. It bowed and closed the door.

Garrick looked around him, frowning. One light tube more or less didn't make a lot of difference; there was still the light from the sconces at the walls, from the reading lamps at the chairs and chaise-longue and from the photomural on the long side of the room — to say nothing of the fact that it was broad, hot daylight outside and light poured through the windows. All the same, it was a new sensation to be in a room where the central lighting wasn't on. He didn't like it. It was — creepy.

A rap on the door. A girl was standing there, young, attractive, rather small. But a woman grown, it was apparent. "Mr. Garrick? Mr. Roosenburg is expecting you on the sun deck."

"All right." He rummaged around in the pile of luggage, looking for his briefcase. It wasn't even sorted out! The bellhop had merely dumped the stuff and left.

The girl said: "Is that what you're looking for?" He looked where she was pointing; it was his briefcase, behind another bag. "You'll get used to that around here. Nothing in the right place, nothing working right. We've all gotten used to it."

We. He looked at her sharply, but she was no robot; there was life, not the glow of electronic tubes, in her eyes. "Pretty bad, is it?"

She shrugged. "Let's go see Mr. Roosenburg. I'm Kathryn Pender, by the way. I'm his statistician."

He followed her out into the

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hall. "Statistician, did you say?"

She turned and smiled—a tight, grim smile of annoyance. "That's right. Surprised?"

Garrick said uneasily: "Well, it's more a robot job. Of course, I'm not familiar with the practice in this sector—"

"You will be," she promised bluntly. "No, we aren't taking the elevator. Mr. Roosenburg's in a hurry to see you."

"But—"

She actually glared at him. "Don't you understand? Day before yesterday, I took the elevator and I was hung up between floors for an hour and a half. Something was going on at North Guardian and it took all the power in the lines. Would it happen again today? I don't know. But, believe me, an hour and a half is a long time to be stuck in an elevator."

She turned and led him to the fire stairs. Over her shoulder, she said: "Get it straight once and for all, Mr. Garrick. You're in a disaster area here . . . Anyway, it's only ten more flights."

TEN flights. *Nobody* climbed ten flights of stairs any more!

Garrick was huffing and puffing before they were half way, but the girl kept on ahead, light as a gazelle. Her skirt reached between hip and knees, and Garrick had plenty of opportunity to observe that her legs were attractively tanned. Even so, he couldn't help looking around him.

It was a robot's-eye view of the hotel that he was getting; this was the bare wire armature that held up the confectionery suites and halls where the humans went. Garrick knew, as everyone absently knew, that there were places like this behind the scenes everywhere. Belowstairs, the robots worked; behind scenes, they moved about their errands and did their jobs. But nobody *went* there.

It was funny about the backs of this girl's knees. They were paler than the rest of the leg—

Garrick wrenched his mind back to his surroundings. Take the guard rail along the steps, for instance. It was wire-thin, frail-looking. No doubt it could bear any weight it was required to, but why couldn't it *look* that strong?

The answer, obviously, was that robots did not have humanity's built-in concepts of how strong a rail should look before they could believe it really was strong. If a robot should be in any doubt—and how improbable that a robot should be in doubt!—it would perhaps reach out a sculptured hand and test it. Once. And then it would remember, and never doubt again, and it wouldn't be continually edging toward the

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wall, away from the spider-strand between it and the vertical drop—

He conscientiously took the middle of the steps all the rest of the way up.

Of course, that merely meant a different distraction, when he really wanted to do some thinking. But it was a pleasurable distraction. And by the time they reached the top, he had solved the problem. The pale spots at the back of Miss Pender's knees meant she had got her tan the hard way—walking in the Sun, perhaps working in the Sun, so that the bending knees kept the Sun from the patches at the back; not, as anyone else would acquire a tan, by lying beneath a normal, healthful sunlamp held by a robot masseur.

He wheezed: "You don't mean we're all the way up!"

"All the way up," she said, and looked at him closely. "Here, lean on me if you want to."

"No, thanks!" He staggered over to the door, which opened naturally enough as he approached it, and stepped out into the flood of sunlight on the roof, to meet Mr. Roosenburg.

GARRICK wasn't a medical doctor, but he remembered enough of his basic pre-specialization to know there was something in that fizzy golden drink. It tasted perfectly splendid—just cold enough, just fizzy enough, not quite too sweet. And after two sips of it, he was buoyant with strength and well-being.

He put the glass down and said: "Thank you for whatever it was. Now let's talk."

"Gladly, gladly!" boomed Mr. Roosenburg. "Kathryn, the files!"

Garrick looked after her, shaking his head. Not only was she a statistician, which was robot work, she was also a file clerk—and that was barely robot work. It was the kind of thing handled by a semi-sentient punchcard sorter in a decently run sector.

Roosenburg said sharply: "Shocks you, doesn't it? But that's why you're here." He was a slim, fair little man and he wore a golden beard cropped square.

Garrick took another sip of the fizzy drink. It was good stuff; it didn't intoxicate, but it cheered. He said: "I'm glad to know why I'm here."

The golden beard quivered. "Area Control sent you down and didn't tell you this was a disaster area?"

Garrick put down the glass. "I'm a psychist. Area Control said you needed a psychist. From what I've seen, it's a supply problem, but—"

"Here are the files," said Kathryn Pender, and stood watching him.

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Roosenburg took the spools of tape from her and dropped them in his lap. He asked tangentially: "How old are you, Roger?"

Garrick was annoyed. "I'm a qualified psychist! I happen to be assigned to Area Control and—"

"How old are you?"

Garrick scowled. "Twenty-four."

Roosenburg nodded. "Um. Rather young," he observed. "Maybe you don't remember how things used to be."

Garrick said dangerously: "All the information I need is on that tape. I don't need any lectures from you."

Roosenburg pursed his lips and got up. "Come here a minute, will you?"

HE MOVED over to the rail of the sun deck and pointed. "See those things down there?"

Garrick looked. Twenty stories down, the village straggled off toward the sea in a tangle of pastel oblongs and towers. Over the bay, the hills of the mainland were faintly visible through mist and, riding the bay, the flat white floats of the solar receptors.

"It's a power plant. That what you mean?"

Roosenburg boomed: "A power plant. All the power the world can ever use, out of this one and all the others, all over the world." He peered out at the bobbing floats, soaking up energy from the Sun. "And people used to try to wreck them," he added.

Garrick said stiffly: "I may only be twenty-four years old, Mr. Roosenburg, but I *have* completed school."

"Oh, yes. Of course you have, Roger. But maybe schooling isn't the same thing as living through a time like that. I grew up in the Era of Plenty, when the law was *Consume!* My parents were poor and I still remember the misery of my childhood. Eat and consume, wear and use. I never had a moment's peace, Roger! For the very poor, it was a treadmill; we had to consume so much that we could never catch up, and the further we fell behind, the more the Ration Board forced on us—"

"That's ancient history, Mr. Roosenburg. Morey Fry liberated us from all that."

The girl said softly: "Not all of us."

The man with the golden beard nodded. "Not all of us—as you should know, Roger, being a psychist."

Garrick sat up straight and Roosenburg went on: "Fry showed us that the robots could help at both ends—by producing and by consuming. But it came a little late for some of us. The patterns of childhood do linger on."

Kathryn Pender leaned toward Garrick. "What he's trying to say,

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Mr. Garrick, is that we've got a compulsive consumer on our hands."

III

NORTH GUARDIAN ISLAND — nine miles away. It wasn't as much as a mile wide and not much more than that in length, but it had its city and its bathing beaches, its parks and theaters. It was possibly the most densely populated island in the world . . . for the number of its inhabitants.

The President of the Council convened their afternoon meeting in a large and lavish room. There were nineteen councilmen around a lustrous mahogany table. Over the President's shoulder, the others could see the situation map of North Guardian and the areas surrounding. North Guardian glowed blue, cold, impregnable. The sea was misty green; the mainland, Fisherman's Island, South Guardian and the rest of the little archipelago were hot, hostile red.

Little flickering fingers of red attacked the blue. Flick, and a ruddy flame wiped out a corner of a beach. Flick, and a red spark appeared in the middle of the city, to grow and blossom, and then to die. Each little red whip-flick was a point where, momentarily, the defenses of the island were down; but always and always, the cool blue brightened around the red and drowned it.

The President was tall, stooped, old. It wore glasses, though robot eyes saw well enough without. It said, in a voice that throbbed with power and pride: "The first item of the order of business will be a report of the Defense Secretary."

The Defense Secretary rose to its feet, hooked a thumb in its vest and cleared its throat. "Mr. President—"

"Excuse me, sir." A whisper from the sweet-faced young blonde taking down the minutes of the meeting. "Mr. Trumie has just left Bowling Green, heading north."

The whole council turned to glance at the situation map, where Bowling Green had just flared red.

The President nodded stiffly, like the crown of an old redwood nodding. "You may proceed, Mr. Secretary," it said after a moment.

"Our invasion fleet," began the Secretary, in its high, clear voice, "is ready for sailing on the first suitable tide. Certain units have been, ah, inactivated, at the, ah, instigation of Mr. Trumie. But on the whole, repairs have been completed and the units will be serviceable within the next few hours." Its lean, attractive face

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turned solemn. "I am afraid, however, that the Air Command has sustained certain, ah, increments of attrition — due, I should emphasize, to chances involved in certain calculated risks —"

"Question! Question!" It was the Commissioner of Public Safety, small, dark, fire-eyed, angry.

"Mr. Commissioner?" the President began, but it was interrupted again by the soft whisper of the recording stenographer, listening intently to the earphones that brought news from outside.

"Mr. President," it whispered, "Mr. Trumie has passed the Navy Yard."

THE robots turned to look at the situation map. Bowling Green, though it smoldered in spots, had mostly gone back to blue. But the jagged oblong of the Yard flared red and bright. There was a faint electronic hum in the air, almost a sigh.

The robots turned back to face each other. "Mr. President! I demand that the Defense Secretary explain the loss of the *Graf Zeppelin* and the 456th Bomb Group!"

The Defense Secretary nodded to the Commissioner of Public Safety. "Mr. Trumie threw them away," it said sorrowfully.

Once again, that sighing electronic drone from the assembled robots.

The Council fussed and fiddled with its papers, while the situation map on the wall flared and dwindled, flared and dwindled.

The Defense Secretary cleared its throat again. "Mr. President, there is no question that the, ah, absence of an effective air component will seriously hamper, not to say endanger, our prospects of a suitable landing. Nevertheless — and I say this, Mr. President, in full knowledge of the conclusions that may — indeed, should! — be drawn from such a statement — nevertheless, Mr. President, I say that our forward elements will successfully consummate an assault landing —"

"Mr. President!" The breathless whisper of the blonde stenographer again. "Mr. President, Mr. Trumie is in the building!"

On the situation map behind it, the Pentagon — the building they were in — flared scarlet.

The Attorney General, nearest the door, leaped to its feet. "Mr. President, I hear him!"

And they could all hear now. Far off, down the long corridors, a crash. A faint explosion, and another crash, and a raging, querulous, high-pitched voice. A nearer crash, and a sustained, smashing, banging sound, coming toward them.

The oak-paneled doors flew

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open with a crash, splintering.

A tall, dark male figure in gray leather jacket, rocket-gun holsters swinging at its hips, stepped through the splintered doors and stood surveying the Council. Its hands hung just below the butts of the rocket guns.

It drawled: "Mistuh Anderson Trumie!"

It stepped aside. Another male figure — shorter, darker, hobbling with the aid of a stainless steel cane that concealed a ray-pencil, wearing the same gray leather jacket and the same rocket-gun holsters — entered, stood for a moment, and took position on the other side of the door.

Between them, Mr. Anderson Trumie shambled ponderously into the Council Chamber to call on his Council.

SONNY TRUMIE, come of age. He wasn't much more than five feet tall, but his weight was close to four hundred pounds. He stood there in the door, leaning against the splintered oak, quivering jowls obliterating his neck, his eyes nearly swallowed in the fat that swamped his skull, his thick legs trembling as they tried to support him.

"You're all under arrest!" he screeched. "Traitors! Traitors!"

He panted ferociously, glowering at them. They waited with bowed heads. Beyond the ring of councilmen, the situation map slowly blotted out the patches of red as the repair robots worked feverishly to fix what Sonny Trumie had destroyed.

"Mr. Crockett!" Sonny cried shrilly. "Slay me these traitors!"

Wheep-wheep, and the guns whistled out of their holsters into the tall bodyguard's hands. *Rata-tat-tat,* and two by two, the nineteen councilmen leaped, clutched at air and fell as the rocket pellets pierced them through.

"That one, too!" Mr. Trumie pointed at the sweet-faced blonde.

Bang. The sweet young face convulsed and froze; it fell, slumping across its little table.

On the wall, the situation map flared red again, but only faintly — for what were twenty robots?

Sonny gestured curtly to his other bodyguard. It leaped forward, tucking the stainless steel cane under one arm, putting the other around the larded shoulders of Sonny Trumie. "Ah, now, young master," it crooned. "You just get ahold o' Long' John's arm now —"

"Get them fixed," Sonny ordered abruptly. He pushed the President of the Council out of its chair and, with the robot's help, sank into it himself. "Get them fixed *right,* you hear? I've had enough traitors! I want them to do what I tell them!"

"Sartin sure, young master.

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Long John'll be pleased to — "

"Do it *now!* And you, Davey, I want my lunch!"

"Reckoned you would, Mistuh Trumie. It's right hyar." The Crockett robot kicked the fallen councilmen out of the way as a procession of waiters filed in from the corridor.

Sonny ate.

He ate until eating was pain, and then he sat there sobbing, his arms braced against the tabletop, until he could eat more.

The Crockett robot said worriedly: "Mistuh Trumie, moughtn't you rear back a mite? Old Doc Aeschylus, he don't hold with you eatin' too much, you know."

"I hate Doc!" Trumie said bitterly.

He pushed the plates off the table. They fell with a rattle and a clatter, and they went spinning away as he heaved himself up and lurched alone over to the window.

"I hate Doc!" he brayed again, sobbing, staring through tears out the window at his kingdom with its hurrying throngs and marching troops and roaring waterfront. The tallow shoulders tried to shake with pain. He felt as though hot cinderblocks were being thrust down his throat, the ragged edges cutting, the hot weight crushing.

"Take me back," he wept to the robots. "Take me away from these traitors. Take me to my Private Place!"

IV

"AS YOU see," said Roosenburg, "he's dangerous."

Garrick looked out over the water, toward North Guardian. "I'd better look at his tapes," he said.

The girl swiftly picked up the reels and began to thread them into the projector. Dangerous. This Trumie indeed was dangerous, Garrick conceded. Dangerous to the balanced, stable world, for it only took one Trumie to topple its stability. It had taken thousands and thousands of years for society to learn its delicate tightrope walk. It was a matter for a psychist, all right.

And Garrick was uncomfortably aware that he was only twenty-four.

"Here you are," said the girl.

"Look them over," Roosenburg suggested. "Then, after you've studied the tapes on Trumie, we've got something else. One of his robots. But you'll need the tapes first."

"Let's go," said Garrick.

The girl flicked a switch and the life of Anderson Trumie appeared before them, in color, in three dimensions — in miniature.

Robots have eyes; and where

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the robots go, the eyes of Robot Central go with them. And the robots go everywhere. From the stored files of Robot Central came the spool of tape that was the frightful life story of Sonny Trumie.

The tapes played into the globe-shaped viewer, ten inches high, a crystal ball that looked back into the past. First, from the recording eyes of the robots in Sonny Trumie's nursery. The lonely little boy, twenty years before, lost in the enormous nursery.

"Disgusting!" breathed Kathryn Pender, wrinkling her nose. "How could people live like that?"

Garrick said: "Please, let me watch this. It's important."

In the gleaming globe, the little boy kicked at his toys, threw himself across his huge bed, sobbed. Garrick squinted, frowned, reached out, tried to make contact. It was hard. The

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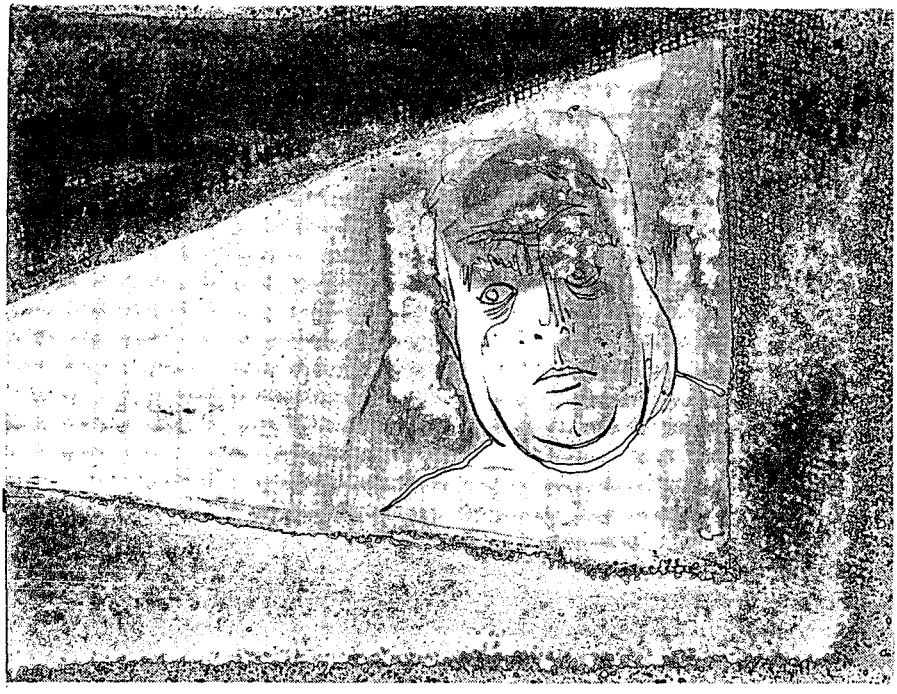

tapes showed the objective facts, but for a psychist, it was the subjective reality behind the facts that mattered.

Kicking at his toys. Yes, but why? Because he was tired of them — and why was he tired? Because he feared them? *Kicking at his toys.* Because —, because they were the wrong toys? *Kicking — hate them! Don't want them! Want —*

A bluish flare in the viewing globe. Garrick blinked and jumped, and that was the end of that section.

THE colors flowed and suddenly jelled into bright life. Garrick recognized the scene after a moment — it was right there in Fisherman's Island, some pleasure spot overlooking the water. A bar, and at the end of it was Anderson Trumie at twenty, staring somberly into an empty glass. The view was through the eyes of the robot bartender.

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Anderson Trumie was weeping.

Once again, there was the objective fact — but the fact behind the fact, what was it? Trumie had been drinking, drinking. Why?

Drinking, drinking.

With a sudden sense of shock, Garrick saw what the drink was — the golden, fizzy liquor. Not intoxicating. Not habit-forming! Trumie had become no drunk. It was something else that kept him *drinking, drinking, must drink, must keep on drinking, or else —*

And again the bluish flare.

There was more — Trumie feverishly collecting objects of art, Trumie decorating a palace, Trumie on a world tour, and Trumie returned to Fisherman's Island.

And then there was no more.

"That," said Roosenburg, "is the file. Of course, if you want the raw, unedited tapes, we can try to get them from Robot Central, but —"

"No." The way things were, it was best to stay away from Robot Central; there might be more breakdowns and there wasn't much time. Besides, something was beginning to suggest itself.

"Run the first one again," said Garrick. "I think maybe I'll find something there."

GARRICK made out a quick requisition slip and handed it to Kathryn Pender, who looked at it, raised her eyebrows, shrugged and went off to have it filled.

By the time she came back, Roosenburg had escorted Garrick to the room where the captured Trumie robot lay chained.

"He's cut off from Robot Central," Roosenburg was saying. "I suppose you figured that out. Imagine! Not only has Trumie built a whole city for himself — but even his own Robot Central!"

Garrick looked at the robot. It was a fisherman, or so Roosenburg had said. It was small, dark, black-haired; possibly the hair would have been curly, if the sea water hadn't plastered the curls to the scalp. It was still damp from the tussle that had landed it in the water and eventually into Roosenburg's hands.

Roosenburg was already at work. Garrick tried to think of the robot as a machine, but it wasn't easy. The thing looked very nearly human — except for the crystal and copper that showed where the back of its head had been removed.

"It's as bad as a brain operation," said Roosenburg, working rapidly without looking up. "I've got to short out the input leads without disturbing the electronic balance —"

Snip, snip. A curl of copper fell free, to be grabbed by Roosenburg's tweezers. The fisherman's arms and legs kicked sharply like

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a dissected galvanized frog's.

Kathryn Pender said: "They found him this morning, casting nets into the bay and singing *O Sole Mio*. He's from North Guardian, all right."

Abruptly the lights flickered and turned yellow, then slowly returned to normal brightness. Roger Garrick got up and walked over to the window. North Guardian was a haze of light in the sky, across the water.

Click, *snap*. The fisherman robot began to sing:

Tutte le serre, dopo quel fanal,
Dietro la caserma, ti staró ed—

Click. Roosenburg muttered under his breath and probed further. Kathryn Pender joined Garrick at the window.

"Now you see," she said.

Garrick shrugged. "You can't blame him."

"*I* blame him!" she said hotly. "I've lived here all my life. Fisherman's Island used to be a tourist spot—why, it was lovely here. And look at it now. The elevators don't work. The lights [illegible] don't work. Practically all of our robots are gone. Spare parts, construction material, everything—it's all gone to North Guardian! There isn't a day that passes, Garrick, when half a dozen bargeloads of stuff don't go north, because *he* requisitioned them. Blame him? I'd like to kill him!"

Snap. Sputter*snap*. The fisherman lifted its head and caroled:

Forse dommani, piangerai,
E dopo tu, sorriderai—

ROOSENBURG'S probe uncovered a flat black disc. "Kathryn, look this up, will you?" He read the serial number from the disc and then put down the probe. He stood flexing his fingers, looking irritably at the motionless figure.

Garrick joined him. Roosenburg jerked his head at the fisherman.

"That's robot repair work, trying to tinker with their insides. Trumie has his own Robot Central, as I told you. What I have to do is recontrol this one from the substation on the mainland, but keep its receptor circuits open to North Guardian on the symbolic level. You understand what I'm talking about? It'll think from North Guardian, but act from the mainland."

"Sure," said Garrick.

"And it's damned close work. There isn't much room inside one of those things—" He stared at the figure and picked up the probe again.

Kathryn Pender came back with a punchcard in her hand. "It was one of ours, all right. Used to be a busboy in the cafeteria at the beach club." She scowled. "That Trumie!"

"You can't blame him," Garrick

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said reasonably. "He's only trying to be good."

She looked at him queerly. "He's only —"

Roosenburg interrupted with an exultant cry. "Got it! Okay, you — sit up and start telling us what Trumie's up to now!"

The fisherman figure said obligingly, "Yes, Boss. What you wanna know?"

What they wanted to know, they asked; and what they asked, it told them, volunteering nothing, concealing nothing.

There was Anderson Trumie, king of his island, the compulsive consumer.

It was like an echo of the bad old days of the Age of Plenty, when the world was smothering under the endless, pounding flow of goods from the robot factories and the desperate race between consumption and production strained the whole society. But Trumie's orders came not from society, but from within. *Consume!* commanded something inside him, and *Use!* it cried, and *Devour!* it ordered. And Trumie obeyed, heroically.

They listened to what the fisherman robot had to say, and the picture was dark. Armies had sprung up on North Guardian; navies floated in its waters. Anderson Trumie stalked among his creations like a blubbery god, wrecking and ruling. Garrick could see the pattern in what the fisherman had to say. In Trumie's mind, he was dictator, building a war machine. He was supreme engineer, constructing a mighty state. He was warrior.

"HE WAS playing tin soldiers," said Roger Garrick, and Roosenburg and the girl nodded.

"The trouble is," Roosenburg said, "he has stopped playing. Invasion fleets, Garrick! He isn't content with North Guardian any more. He wants the rest of the country, too!"

"You can't blame him," said Roger Garrick for the third time, and stood up. "The question is, what do we do about it?"

"That's what you're here for," Kathryn told him.

"All right. We can forget about the soldiers — as soldiers, that is. They won't hurt anyone. Robots can't."

"I know that," Kathryn snapped.

"The problem is what to do about Trumie's drain on the world's resources." Garrick pursed his lips. "According to my directive from Area Control, the first plan was to let him alone — there is still plenty of everything for anyone, so why not let Trumie enjoy himself? But that didn't work out too well."

"Didn't work out too well," re-

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peated Kathryn Pender bitterly.

"No, no—not on your local level," Garrick explained quickly. "After all, what are a few thousand robots, a few hundred million dollars' worth of equipment? We could resupply this area in a week."

"And in a week," said Roosenburg, "Trumie would have us cleaned out again!"

"*That's* the trouble," Garrick declared. "He doesn't seem to have a stopping point. Yet we can't *refuse* his orders. Speaking as a psychist, that would set a very bad precedent. It would put ideas in the minds of a lot of persons—minds that, in some [illegible] not prove stable in cases, might [illegible] solely relies the absence of a completely able source of everything they need, on request. If we say no to Trumie, we open the door on some mighty dark corners of the human mind. Covetousness. Greed. Pride of possession—"

"So what are you going to do?" demanded Kathryn Pender.

Garrick said resentfully: "The only thing there is *to* do. I'm going to look over Trumie's folder again. And then I'm going to North Guardian Island."

V

ROGER GARRICK was all too aware of the fact that he was only twenty-four. But his age couldn't make a great deal of difference. The oldest and wisest psychist in Area Control's wide sphere might have been doubtful of success in as thorny a job as the one ahead.

He and Kathryn Pender warily started out at daybreak. Vapor was rising from the sea about them, and the little battery-motor of their launch whined softly beneath the keelson. Garrick sat patting the little box that contained their invasion equipment, while the girl steered.

The workshops of Fisherman's Island had been all night making some of the things in that box—not because they were so difficult to make, but because it had been a bad night. Big things were going on at North Guardian; twice, the power had been out entirely for an hour, while the demand on the lines from North Guardian took all the power the system could deliver.

The Sun was well up as they came within hailing distance of the Navy Yard.

Robots were hard at work; the Yard was bustling with activity. An overhead traveling crane, eight feet tall, laboriously lowered a prefabricated fighting top onto an eleven-foot aircraft carrier.

A motor torpedo boat — full-sized, this one was, not to scale—rocked at anchor just before the

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bow of their launch. Kathryn steered around it, ignoring the hail from the robot lieutenant-j.g. at its rail.

She glanced at Garrick over her shoulder, her face taut. "It's — it's all mixed up."

Garrick nodded. The battleships were model-sized, the small boats full scale. In the city beyond the Yard, the pinnacle of the Empire State Building barely cleared the Pentagon, right next door. A soaring suspension bridge leaped out from the shore a quarter of a mile away and stopped short a thousand yards out, over empty water.

IT WAS easy to understand — even for a psychist just out of school, on his first real assignment. Trumie was trying to run a world singlehanded, and where there were gaps in his conception of what his world should be, the results showed.

"Get me battleships!" he ordered his robot supply clerks, and they found the only battleships there were in the world to copy, the child-sized, toy-scaled play battleships that still delighted kids.

"Get me an Air Force!" And a thousand model bombers were hastily put together.

"Build me a bridge!" But perhaps he had forgotten to say to where.

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GARRICK shook his head and focused on the world around him. Kathryn Pender was standing on a gray steel stage, the mooring line from their launch secured to what looked like a coast defense cannon—but only about four feet long. Garrick picked up the little box and leaped up to the stage beside her. She turned to look at the city.

"Hold on a second." He was opening the box, taking out two little cardboard placards. He turned her by the shoulder and, with pins from the box, attached one of the cards to her back. "Now me," he said, turning his back to her.

She read the placard dubiously:

I
AM A
SPY!

"Garrick," she said, "you're sure you know what you're doing?"

"Put it on!" She shrugged and pinned it to the back of his jacket.

Side by side, they entered the citadel of the enemy.

According to the fisherman robot, Trumie lived in a gingerbread castle south of the Pentagon. Most of the robots got no chance to enter it. The city out-

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side the castle was Trumie's kingdom, and he roamed about it, overseeing, changing, destroying, rebuilding. But inside the castle was his Private Place; the only robots that had both an inside- and outside-the-castle existence were the two bodyguards of his youth, Davey Crockett and Long John Silver.

"That," said Garrick, "must be the Private Place."

It was decidedly a gingerbread castle. The "gingerbread" was stonework, gargoyles and columns; there were a moat and a drawbridge, and there were robot guards with crooked little rifles, wearing scarlet tunics and fur shakos three feet tall. The drawbridge was up and the guards stood at stiff attention.

"Let's reconnoiter," said Garrick. He was unpleasantly conscious of the fact that every robot they passed — and they had passed thousands — had turned to look at the signs on their backs.

Yet it was right, wasn't it? There was no hope of avoiding observation in any event. The only hope was to fit somehow into the pattern—and spies would certainly be a part of the military pattern.

Wouldn't they?

GARRICK turned his back on doubts and led the way around the gingerbread palace.

The only entrance was the drawbridge.

They stopped out of sight of the ramrod-stiff guards. Garrick said: "We'll go in. As soon as we get inside, you put on your costume." He handed her the box. "You know what to do. All you have to do is keep him quiet for a while and let me talk to him."

"Garrick, will this work?"

Garrick exploded: "How the devil do I know? I had Trumie's dossier to work with. I know everything that happened to him when he was a kid — when this trouble started. But to reach him takes a long time, Kathryn. And we don't have a long time. So —"

He took her elbow and marched her toward the guards. "So you know what to do," he said.

"I hope so," breathed Kathryn Pender, looking very small and very young.

They marched down the wide white pavement, past the motionless guards—

Something was coming toward them. Kathryn held back.

"Come on!" Garrick muttered.

"No, look!" she whispered. "Is that — is that Trumie?"

He looked, then stared.

It was Trumie, larger than life. It was Anderson Trumie, the entire human population of the most - congested - island - for - its-population in the world. On one side of him was a tall dark

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figure, on the other side a squat dark figure, helping him along. His face was horror, drowned in fat. The bloated cheeks shook damply, wet with tears. The eyes squinted out with fright on the world he had made.

Trumie and his bodyguards rolled up to them and past. And then Anderson Trumie stopped.

He turned the blubbery head and read the sign on the back of the girl. I AM A SPY. Panting heavily, clutching the shoulder of the Crockett robot, he gaped wildly at her.

Garrick cleared his throat. This far his plan had gone, and then there was a gap. There had to be a gap. Trumie's history, in the folder that Roosenburg had supplied, had told him what to do with Trumie; and Garrick's own ingenuity had told him how to reach the man. But a link was missing. Here was the subject, and here was the psychist who could cure him, and it was up to Garrick to start the cure.

TRUMIE cried out in a staccato bleat: "You! What are you? Where do you belong?"

He was talking to the girl. Beside him, the Crockett robot murmured: "Reckon she's a spy, Mistuh Trumie. See thet sign a-hangin' on her back?"

"Spy? Spy?" The quivering lips pouted. "Curse you, are you Mata Hari? What are you doing out here? It's changed its face," Trumie complained to the Crockett robot. "It doesn't belong here. It's supposed to be in the harem. Go on, Crockett, get her back!"

"Wait!" said Garrick, but the Crockett robot was ahead of him. It took Kathryn Pender by the arm.

"Come along thar," it said soothingly, and urged her across the drawbridge. She glanced back at Garrick, and for a moment it looked as though she were going to speak. Then she shook her head, as if giving an order.

"Kathryn!" yelled Garrick. "Trumie, wait a minute! That isn't Mata Hari!"

No one was listening. Kathryn Pender disappeared into the Private Place. Trumie, leaning heavily on the hobbling Long John Silver robot, followed.

Garrick, coming back to life, leaped after them.

The scarlet-coated guards jumped before him, their shakos bobbing, their crooked little rifles crossed to bar his way.

He ordered: "One side! Out of my way! I'm a human, don't you understand? You've got to let me pass!"

They didn't even look at him; trying to get by them was like trying to walk through a wall of moving, thrusting steel. He shoved and they pushed him back; he

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tried to dodge and they were before him. It was hopeless.

And then it was hopeless indeed, because behind them, he saw, the drawbridge had gone up.

VI

SONNY TRUMIE collapsed into a chair like a mound of blubber falling to the deck of a whaler.

Though he made no signal, the procession of serving robots started at once. In minced the maitre d', bowing and waving its graceful hands. In marched the sommelier, clanking its necklace of keys, bearing its wines in their buckets of ice. In came the lovely waitress robots and the sturdy steward robots, with the platters and tureens, the plates and bowls and cups.

They spread a meal – a dozen meals – before him, and he began to eat.

He ate as a penned pig eats, gobbling until it chokes, forcing the food down because there is nothing to do *but* eat. He ate, with a sighing accompaniment of moans and gasps, and some of the food was salted with the tears of pain he wept into it, and some of the wine was spilled by his shaking hand. But he ate. Not for the first time that day, and not for the tenth.

Sonny Trumie wept as he ate. He no longer even knew he was weeping. There was the gaping void inside him that he had to fill, had to fill; there was the gaping world about him that he had to people and build and furnish . . . and use.

He moaned to himself. Four hundred pounds of meat and lard, and he had to lug it from end to end of his island, every hour of every day, never resting, never at peace! There should have been a place somewhere, there should have been a time, when he could rest. When he could sleep without dreaming, sleep without waking after a scant few hours with the goading drive to eat and to use, to use and to eat . . .

And it was all so *wrong!*

The robots didn't understand. They didn't try to understand; they didn't think for themselves. Let him take his eyes from any one of them for a single day and everything went *wrong*. It was necessary to keep after them, from end to end of the island, checking and overseeing and ordering – yes, and destroying to rebuild, over and over!

He moaned again and pushed the plate away.

He rested, with his tallow forehead flat against the table, waiting, while inside him the pain ripped and ripped, and finally became bearable again. And slowly he pushed himself up, and rested

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for a moment, and pulled a fresh plate toward him, and began again to eat.

AFTER a while, he stopped. Not because he didn't want to go on, but because he absolutely couldn't.

He was bone-tired, but something was bothering him — one more detail to check, one more thing that was *wrong*. Mata Hari. The houri at the drawbridge. It shouldn't have been out of the Private Place. It should have been in the harem, of course. Not that it mattered, except to Sonny Trumie's never-resting sense of what was right.

Time was when the houris of the harem had their uses, but that time was long and long ago; now they were property, to be fussed over and made to be *right*, to be replaced if they were worn, destroyed if they were *wrong*. But only property, as all of North Guardian was property — as all of the world would be his property, if only he could manage it.

But property shouldn't be *wrong*.

He signaled to the Crockett robot and, leaning on it, walked down the long terrazzo hall toward the harem. He tried to remember what the houri had looked like. The face didn't matter; he was nearly sure it had changed it. It had worn a sheer red blouse and a brief red skirt, he was almost certain, but the face —

It had had a face, of course. But Sonny had lost the habit of faces. This one had been somehow different, but he couldn't remember just why. Still — the blouse and skirt were red, he was nearly sure. And it had been carrying something in a box. And that was odd, too.

He waddled a little faster, for now he was positive it was *wrong*.

"Thar's the harem, Mistuh Trumie," said the robot at his side. It disengaged itself gently, leaped forward and held the door to the harem for him.

"Wait for me," Sonny commanded, and waddled forward into the harem halls.

Once he had so arranged the harem that he needed no help inside it; the halls were railed, at a height where it was easy for a pudgy hand to grasp the rail; the distances were short, the rooms close together.

He paused and called over his shoulder: "Stay where you can hear me." It had occurred to him that if the houri robot was *wrong*, he would need Crockett's guns to make it right.

A chorus of female voices sprang into song as he entered the main patio. They were a bevy of beauties, clustered around a fountain, diaphanously dressed,

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languorously glancing at Sonny Trumie as he waddled inside.

"Shut up!" he shrieked. "Go back to your rooms!"

They bowed their heads and, one by one, slipped into the cubicles.

No sign of the red blouse and the red skirt. He began the rounds of the cubicles, panting, peering into them.

"Hello, Sonny," whispered Theda Bara, lithe on a leopard rug, and he passed on. "I love you!" cried Nell Gwynn, and, "Come to me!" commanded Cleopatra, but he passed them by. He passed Dubarry and Marilyn Monroe, he passed Moll Flanders and he passed Troy's Helen. No sign of the houri in red—

Yes, there was. He didn't see the houri, but he saw the signs of the houri's presence: the red blouse and the red skirt, lying limp and empty on the floor.

Sonny gasped: "Where are you? Come out here where I can see you!"

Nobody answered Sonny.

"Come out!" he bawled.

And then he stopped. A door opened and someone came out; not an houri, not female; a figure without sex but loaded with love, a teddy-bear figure, as tall as pudgy Sonny Trumie himself, waddling as he waddled, its stubby welcoming arms stretched out to him.

HE COULD hardly believe his eyes. Its color was a little darker than Teddy. It was a good deal taller than Teddy. But unquestionably, undoubtedly, in everything that mattered, it was—

"Teddy," whispered Sonny Trumie, and let the furry arms go around his four hundred pounds.

Twenty years disappeared. "They wouldn't let me have you," Sonny told the teddy-bear.

It said, in a voice musical and warm: "It's all right, Sonny. You can have me now, Sonny. You can have everything, Sonny."

"They took you away," he whispered, remembering.

They took the teddy-bear away; he had never forgotten. They took it away and Mother was wild and Father was furious. They raged at the little boy and scolded him and threatened him. Didn't he know they were *poor*, and Did he want to ruin them all, and What was wrong with him, anyway, that he wanted his little sister's silly stuffed robots when he was big enough to use nearly grown-up goods?

The night had been a terror, with the frowning, sad robots ringed around and the little girl crying; and what had made it terror was not the scolding—he'd had scoldings—but the *worry*, the *fear* and almost the *panic* in his parents' voices. For what he did, he came to understand, was no

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longer a childish sin. It was a *big* sin, a failure to consume his quota—

And it had to be punished.

The first punishment was the extra birthday party.

The second was—shame.

Sonny Trumie, not quite twelve, was made to feel shame and humiliation. Shame is only a little thing, but it makes the victim of it little, too.

Shame.

The robots were reset to scorn him. He woke to mockery and went to bed with contempt. Even his little sister lisped the catalogue of his failures.

You aren't trying, Sonny, and You don't care, Sonny, and You're a terrible disappointment to us, Sonny.

And finally all the things were true, because Sonny at twelve was what his elders made him.

And they made him . . . "neurotic" is the term; a pretty-sounding word that means ugly things like fear and worry and endless self-reproach . . .

"Don't worry," whispered the Teddy. "Don't worry, Sonny. You can have me. You can have what you want. You don't have to have anything else."

VII

GARRICK raged through the halls of the Private Place like a tiger. "Kathryn!" he shouted. "Kathryn Pender!"

The robots peeped out at him worriedly and sometimes they got in his way and he bowled them aside. They didn't fight back, naturally — what robot would hurt a human? But sometimes they spoke to him, pleading, for it was not according to the wishes of Mr. Trumie that anyone but him rage destroying through North Guardian Island. Garrick passed them by.

"Kathryn!" he called. "Kathryn!"

He told himself fiercely: Trumie was *not* dangerous. Trumie was laid bare in his folder, the one that Roosenburg had supplied, and he couldn't be blamed; he meant no harm. He was once a little boy who was trying to be good by consuming, consuming, and he wore himself into neurosis doing it; and then they changed the rules on him. End of the ration, end of forced consumption, as the robots took over for mankind at the other end of the farm-and-factory cornucopia. It wasn't necessary to struggle to consume, so the rules were changed.

And maybe Trumie knew that the rules had been changed, but Sonny didn't. It was Sonny, the little boy trying to be good, who had made North Guardian Island.

And it was Sonny who owned the Private Place and all it held —including Kathryn Pender.

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Garrick called hoarsely: "Kathryn! If you hear me, *answer me!*"

It had seemed so simple. The fulcrum on which the weight of Trumie's neurosis might move was a teddy-bear. Give him a teddy-bear — or, perhaps, a teddy-bear suit, made by night in the factories of Fisherman's Island, with a girl named Kathryn Pender inside — and let him hear, from a source he could trust, the welcome news that it was no longer necessary to struggle, that compulsive consumption could have an end. Then Garrick or any other psychist would clear it all up, but only if Trumie would listen.

"Kathryn!" roared Roger Garrick, racing through a room of mirrors and carved statues. Because, just in case Trumie didn't listen, just in case the folder was wrong and Teddy wasn't the key —

Why, then, Teddy to Trumie would be only a robot. And Trumie destroyed them by the score.

"KATHRYN!" bellowed Roger Garrick, trotting through the silent palace, and at last he heard what might have been an answer. At least it was a voice — a girl's voice, at that. He was before a passage that led to a room with a fountain and silent female robots, standing and watching him. The voice came from a small room. He ran to the door.

It was the right door.

There was Trumie, four hundred pounds of lard, lying on a marble bench with a foam-rubber cushion, the jowled head in the small lap of —

Teddy. Or Kathryn Pender in the teddy-bear suit, the sticklike legs pointed straight out, the sticklike arms clumsily patting him. She was talking to him, gently and reassuringly. She was telling him what he needed to know — that he had eaten *enough*, that he had used *enough*, that he had consumed *enough* to win the respect of all, and an end to consuming.

Garrick himself could not have done better.

It was a sight from Mother Goose, the child being soothed by his toy. But it was not a sight that fitted in well with its surroundings, for the seraglio was upholstered in mauve and pink, and the paintings that hung about were wicked.

Sonny Trumie rolled the pendulous head and looked squarely at Garrick. The worry was gone from the fear-filled little eyes.

Garrick stepped back.

No need for him just at this moment. Let Trumie relax for a while, as he had not been able to relax for a score of years. Then the psychist could pick up where

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the girl had been unable to proceed, but in the meantime, Trumie was finally at rest.

The Teddy looked up at Garrick and in its bright blue eyes, the eyes that belonged to the girl named Kathryn, he saw a queer tincture of triumph and compassion.

Garrick nodded, and left, and went out to the robots of North Guardian, and started them clearing away the monstrous child's-eye conception of an empire.

SONNY TRUMIE nestled his head in the lap of the teddy-bear. It was talking to him nicely, so nicely. It was droning away: "Don't worry, Sonny. Don't worry. Everything's all right. Everything's all right." Why, it was almost as though it were real.

It had been, he calculated with the part of his mind that was razor-sharp and never relaxed, nearly two hours since he had eaten. Two hours! And he felt as though he could go another hour at least, maybe two. Maybe — maybe even not eat at all again that day. Maybe even learn to live on three meals. Perhaps two. Perhaps —

He wriggled — as well as four hundred greasy pounds can wriggle — and pressed against the soft warm fur of the teddy-bear. It was so soothing.

"You don't have to eat so much, Sonny. You don't have to drink so much. No one will mind. Your father won't mind, Sonny. Your mother won't mind . . ."

It was very comfortable to hear the teddy-bear telling him those things. It made him drowsy. So deliciously drowsy! It wasn't like going to sleep, as Sonny Trumie had known going to sleep for a dozen or more years, the bitterly fought surrender to the anesthetic weariness. It was just drowsy.

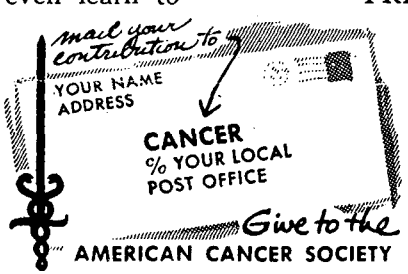
And he did want to go to sleep.

And finally he slept. All of him. Not just the four hundred pounds of blubber and the little tormented eyes, but even the razor-sharp mind-Trumie that lived in the sad, obedient hulk.

It slept.

It had not slept all these twenty years.

— FREDERIK POHL



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Dead Ringer

By LESTER DEL REY

There was nothing, especially on Earth, which could set him free — the truth least of all!

DANE PHILLIPS slouched in the window seat, watching the morning crowds on their way to work and carefully avoiding any attempt to read Jordan's old face as the editor skimmed through the notes. He had learned to make his tall, bony body seem all loose-jointed relaxation, no matter what he felt. But the oversized hands in his pockets were clenched so tightly that the nails were cutting into his palms.

Every tick of the old-fashioned clock sent a throb racing through his brain. Every rustle of the pages seemed to release a fresh shot of adrenalin into his blood stream. *This time*, his mind was pleading. *It has to be right this time. . .*

Jordan finished his reading and shoved the folder back. He reached for his pipe, sighed, and then nodded slowly. "A nice job of researching, Phillips. And it might make a good feature for the Sunday section, at that."

It took a second to realize that the words meant acceptance, for Phillips had prepared himself too thoroughly against another failure. Now he felt the tautened

Illustrated by DICK FRANCIS

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muscles release, so quickly that he would have fallen if he hadn't been braced against the seat.

He groped in his mind, hunting for words, and finding none. There was only the hot, sudden flame of unbelieving hope. And then an almost blinding exultation.

JORDAN didn't seem to notice his silence. The editor made a neat pile of the notes, nodding again. "Sure. I like it. We've been short of shock stuff lately and the readers go for it when we can get a fresh angle. But naturally you'd have to leave out all that nonsense on Blanding. Hell, the man's just buried, and his relatives and friends—"

"But that's the proof!" Phillips stared at the editor, trying to penetrate through the haze of hope that had somehow grown chilled and unreal. His thoughts were abruptly disorganized and out of his control. Only the urgency remained. "It's the key evidence. And we've got to move fast! I don't know how long it takes, but even one more day may be too late!"

Jordan nearly dropped the pipe from his lips as he jerked upright to peer sharply at the younger man. "Are you crazy? Do you seriously expect me to get an order to exhume him now? What would it get us, other than lawsuits? Even if we could get the order without cause — which we can't!"

The the pipe did fall as he gaped open-mouthed. "My God, you believe all that stuff. You expected us to publish it *straight!*"

"No," Dane said thickly. The hope was gone now, as if it had never existed, leaving a numb emptiness where nothing mattered. "No, I guess I didn't really expect anything. But I believe the facts. Why shouldn't I?"

He reached for the papers with hands he could hardly control and began stuffing them back into the folder. All the careful documentation, the fingerprints — smudged, perhaps, in some cases, but still evidence enough for anyone but a fool —

"Phillips?" Jordan said questioningly to himself, and then his voice was taking on a new edge. "Phillips! Wait a minute, I've got it now! *Dane* Phillips, not *Arthur!* Two years on the *Trib.* Then you turned up on the *Register* in Seattle? Phillip Dean, or some such name there."

"Yeah," Dane agreed. There was no use in denying anything now. "Yeah, Dane Arthur Phillips. So I suppose I'm through here?"

Jordan nodded again and there was a faint look of fear in his expression. "You can pick up your pay on the way out. And make

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it quick, before I change my mind and call the boys in white!"

IT could have been worse. It had been worse before. And there was enough in the pay envelope to buy what he needed — a flash camera, a little folding shovel from one of the surplus houses, and a bottle of good scotch. It would be dark enough for him to taxi out to Oakhaven Cemetery, where Blanding had been buried.

It wouldn't change the minds of the fools, of course. Even if he could drag back what he might find, without the change being completed, they wouldn't accept the evidence. He'd been crazy to think anything could change their minds. And they called *him* a fanatic! If the facts he'd dug up in ten years of hunting wouldn't convince them, nothing would. And yet he had to see for himself, before it was too late!

He picked a cheap hotel at random and checked in under an assumed name. He couldn't go back to his room while there was a chance that Jordan still might try to turn him in. There wouldn't be time for Sylvia's detectives to bother him, probably, but there was the ever-present danger that one of the aliens might intercept the message.

He shivered. He'd been risking that for ten years, yet the likelihood was still a horror to him. The uncertainty made it harder to take than any human-devised torture could be. There was no way of guessing what an alien might do to anyone who discovered that all men were not human — that some were . . . zombies.

There was the classic syllogism: *All men are mortal; I am a man; therefore, I am mortal.* But not Blanding — or Corporal Harding.

It was Harding's "death" that had started it all during the fighting on Guadalcanal. A grenade had come flying into the foxhole where Dane and Harding had felt reasonably safe. The concussion had knocked Dane out, possibly saving his life when the enemy thought he was dead. He'd come to in the daylight to see Harding lying there, mangled and twisted, with his throat torn. There was blood on Dane's uniform, obviously spattered from the dead man. It hadn't been a mistake or delusion; Harding had been dead.

It had taken Dane two days of crawling and hiding to get back to his group, too exhausted to report Harding's death. He'd slept for twenty hours. And when he awoke, Harding had been standing beside him, with a whole throat and a fresh uniform, grinning and kidding him for running off and leaving a stunned friend behind.

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It was no ringer, but Harding himself, complete to the smallest personal memories and personality traits.

THE PRESSURES of war probably saved Dane's sanity while he learned to face the facts. All men are mortal; Harding is not mortal; therefore, Harding is not a man! Nor was Harding alone — Dane found enough evidence to know there were others.

The *Tribune* morgue yielded even more data. A man had faced seven firing squads and walked away. Another survived over a dozen attacks by professional killers. Fingerprints turned up mysteriously "copied" from those of men long dead. Some of the aliens seemed to heal almost instantly; others took days. Some operated completely alone; some seemed to have joined with others. But they were legion.

Lack of a clearer pattern of attack made him consider the possibility of human mutation, but such tissue was too wildly different, and the invasion had begun long before atomics or X-rays. He gave up trying to understand their alien motivations. It was enough that they existed in secret, slowly growing in numbers while mankind was unaware of them.

When his proof was complete and irrefutable, he took it to his editor — to be fired, politely but coldly. Other editors were less polite. But he went on doggedly trying and failing. What else could he do? Somehow, he had to find the few people who could recognize facts and warn them. The aliens would get him, of course, when the story broke, but a warned humanity could cope with them. *Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

Then he met Sylvia by accident after losing his fifth job — a girl who had inherited a fortune big enough to spread his message in paid ads across the country. They were married before he found she was hard-headed about her money. She demanded a full explanation for every cent beyond his allowance. In the end, she got the explanation. And while he was trying to cash the check she gave him, she visited Dr. Buehl, to come back with a squad of quiet, refined strong-arm boys who made sure Dane reached Buehl's "rest home" safely.

Hydrotherapy . . . Buehl as the kindly firm father image . . . analysis . . . hypnosis that stripped every secret from him, including his worst childhood nightmare.

His father had committed a violent, bloody suicide after one of the many quarrels with Dane's mother. Dane had found the body.

Two nights after the funeral,

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he had dreamed of his father's face, horror-filled, at the window. He knew now that it was a normal nightmare, caused by being forced to look at the face in the coffin, but the shock had lasted for years. It had bothered him again, after his discovery of the aliens, until a thorough check had proved without doubt that his father had been fully human, with a human, if tempestuous, childhood behind him.

DR. BUEHL was delighted. "You see, Dane? You *know* it was a nightmare, but you don't really believe it even now. Your father was an alien monster to you — no adult is quite human to a child. And that literal-minded self, your subconscious, saw him after he died. So there are alien monsters who return from death. Then you come to from a concussion. Harding is sprawled out unconscious, covered with blood — probably your blood, since you say he wasn't wounded, later.

"But after seeing your father, you can't associate blood with yourself — you see it as a horrible wound on Harding. When he turns out to be alive, you're still in partial shock, with your subconscious dominant. And that has the answer already. There are monsters who come back from the dead! An exaggerated reaction, but nothing really abnormal. We'll have you out of here in no time."

No non-directive psychiatry for Buehl. The man beamed paternally, chuckling as he added what he must have considered the clincher. "Anyhow, even zombies can't stand fire, Dane, so you can stop worrying about Harding. I checked up on him. He was burned to a crisp in a hotel fire two months ago."

It was logical enough to shake Dane's faith, until he came across Milo Blanding's picture in a magazine article on society in St. Louis. According to the item, Milo was a cousin of *the* Blandings, whose father had vanished in Chile as a young man, and who had just rejoined the family. The picture was of Harding!

An alien could have gotten away by simply committing suicide and being carried from the rest home, but Dane had to do it the hard way, watching his chance and using commando tactics on a guard who had come to accept him as a harmless nut.

In St. Louis, he'd used the "Purloined Letter" technique to hide — going back to newspaper work and using almost his real name. It had seemed to work, too. But he'd been less lucky about Harding-Blanding. The man had been in Europe on some kind of a tour until his return only this last week.

Dane had seen him just once

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then — but long enough to be sure it was Harding — before he died again.

This time, it was in a drunken auto accident that seemed to be none of his fault, but left his body a mangled wreck.

IT WAS almost dark when Dane dismissed the taxi at the false address, a mile from the entrance to the cemetery. He watched it turn back down the road, then picked up the valise with his camera and folding shovel. He shivered as he moved reluctantly ahead. War had proved that he would never be a brave man and the old fears of darkness and graveyards were still strong in him. But he had to know what the coffin contained now, if it wasn't already too late.

It represented the missing link in his picture of the aliens. What happened to them during the period of regrowth? Did they revert to their natural form? Were they at all conscious while the body reshaped itself into wholeness? Dane had puzzled over it night after night, with no answer.

Nor could he figure how they could escape from the grave. Perhaps a man could force his way out of some of the coffins he had inspected. The soil would still be soft and loose in the grave and a lot of the coffins and the boxes around them were strong in appearance only. A determined creature that could exist without much air for long enough might make it. But there were other caskets that couldn't be cracked, at least without the aid of outside help.

What happened when a creature that could survive even the poison of embalming fluids and the draining of all the blood woke up in such a coffin? Dane's mind skitted from it, as always, and then came back to it reluctantly.

There were still accounts of corpses turned up with the nails and hair grown long in the grave. Could normal tissues stand the current tricks of the morticians to have life enough for such growth? The possibility was absurd. Those cases had to be aliens — ones who hadn't escaped. Even they must die eventually in such a case — after weeks and months! It took time for hair to grow.

And there were stories of corpses that had apparently fought and twisted in their coffins still. What was it like for an alien then, going slowly mad while it waited for true death? How long did madness take?

He shivered again, but went steadily on while the cemetery fence appeared in the distance. He'd seen Blanding's coffin — and the big, solid metal casket around it that couldn't be cracked

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by any amount of effort and strength. He was sure the creature was still there, unless it had a confederate. But that wouldn't matter. An empty coffin would also be proof.

DANE AVOIDED the main gate, unsure about whether there would be a watchman or not. A hundred feet away, there was a tree near the ornamental spikes of the iron fence. He threw his bag over and began shinnying up. It was difficult, but he made it finally, dropping onto the soft grass beyond. There was the trace of the Moon at times through the clouds, but it hadn't betrayed him, and there had been no alarm wire along the top of the fence.

He moved from shadow to shadow, his hair prickling along the base of his neck. Locating the right grave in the darkness was harder than he had expected, even with an occasional brief use of the small flashlight. But at last he found the marker that was serving until the regular monument could arrive.

His hands were sweating so much that it was hard to use the small shovel, but the digging of foxholes had given him experience and the ground was still soft from the gravediggers' work. He stopped once, as the Moon came out briefly. Again, a sound in the darkness above left him hovering and sick in the hole. But it must have been only some animal.

He uncovered the top of the casket with hands already blistering.

Then he cursed as he realized the catches were near the bottom, making his work even harder.

He reached them at last, fumbling them open. The metal top of the casket seemed to be a dome of solid lead, and he had no room to maneuver, but it began swinging up reluctantly, until he could feel the polished wood of the coffin.

Dane reached for the lid with hands he could barely control. Fear was thick in his throat now. What could an alien do to a man who discovered it? Would it be Harding there — or some monstrous thing still changing? How long did it take a revived monster to go mad when it found no way to escape?

He gripped the shovel in one hand, working at the lid with the other. Now, abruptly, his nerves steadied, as they had done whenever he was in real battle. He swung the lid up and began groping for the camera.

His hand went into the silk-lined interior and found nothing! He was too late. Either Harding had gotten out somehow before the final ceremony or a confederate had already been here. The coffin was empty.

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THERE were no warning sounds this time — only hands that slipped under his arms and across his mouth, lifting him easily from the grave. A match flared briefly and he was looking into the face of Buehl's chief strong-arm man.

"Hello, Mr. Phillips. Promise to be quiet and we'll release you. Okay?" At Dane's sickened nod, he gestured to the others. "Let him go. And, Tom, better get that filled in. We don't want any trouble from this."

Surprise came from the grave a moment later. "Hey, Burke, there's no corpse here!"

Burke's words killed any hopes Dane had at once. "So what? Ever hear of cremation? Lots of people use a regular coffin for the ashes."

"He wasn't cremated," Dane told him. "You can check up on that." But he knew it was useless.

"Sure, Mr. Phillips. We'll do that." The tone was one reserved for humoring madmen. Burke turned, gesturing. "Better come along, Mr. Phillips. Your wife and Dr. Buehl are waiting at the hotel."

The gate was open now, but there was no sign of a watchman; if one worked here, Sylvia's money would have taken care of that, of course. Dane went along quietly, sitting in the rubble of his hopes while the big car purred through the morning and on down Lindell Boulevard toward the hotel. Once he shivered, and Burke dug out hot brandied coffee. They had thought of everything, including a coat to cover his dirt-soiled clothes as they took him up the elevator to where Buehl and Sylvia were waiting for him.

She had been crying, obviously, but there were no tears or recriminations when she came over to kiss him. Funny, she must still love him — as he'd learned to his surprise he loved her. Under different circumstances . . .

"So you found me?" he asked needlessly of Buehl. He was operating on purely automatic habits now, the reaction from the night and his failure numbing him emotionally. "Jordan got in touch with you?"

Buehl smiled back at him. "We knew where you were all along, Dane. But as long as you acted normal, we hoped it might be better than the home. Too bad we couldn't stop you before you got all mixed up in this."

"So I suppose I'm committed to your booby-hatch again?"

Buehl nodded, refusing to resent the term. "I'm afraid so, Dane — for a while, anyhow. You'll find your clothes in that room. Why don't you clean up a little? Take a hot bath, maybe. You'll feel better."

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DANE went in, surprised when no guards followed him. But they had thought of everything. What looked like a screen on the window had been recently installed and it was strong enough to prevent his escape. Blessed are the poor, for they shall be poorly guarded!

He was turning on the shower when he heard the sound of voices coming through the door. He left the water running and came back to listen. Sylvia was speaking.

"—seems so logical, so completely rational."

"It makes him a dangerous person," Buehl answered, and there was no false warmth in his voice now. "Sylvia, you've got to admit it to yourself. All the reason and analysis in the world won't convince him he's wrong. This time we'll have to use shock treatment. Burn over those memories, fade them out. It's the only possible course."

There was a pause and then a sigh. "I suppose you're right."

Dane didn't wait to hear more. He drew back, while his mind fought to accept the hideous reality. Shock treatment! The works, if what he knew of psychiatry was correct. Enough of it to erase his memories — a part of himself. It wasn't therapy Buehl was considering; it couldn't be.

It was the answer of an alien that had a human in its hands — one who knew too much!

He might have guessed. What better place for an alien than in the guise of a psychiatrist? Where else was there the chance for all the refined, modern torture needed to burn out a man's mind? Dane had spent ten years in fear of being discovered by them — and now Buehl had him.

Sylvia? He couldn't be sure. Probably she was human. It wouldn't make any difference. There was nothing he could do through her. Either she was part of the game or she really thought him mad.

Dane tried the window again, but it was hopeless. There would be no escape this time. Buehl couldn't risk it. The shock treatment — or whatever Buehl would use under the name of shock treatment — would begin at once. It would be easy to slip, to use an overdose of something, to make sure Dane was killed. Or there were ways of making sure it didn't matter. They could leave him alive, but take his mind away.

In alien hands, human psychiatry could do worse than all the medieval torture chambers!

THE SICKNESS grew in his stomach as he considered the worst that could happen. Death he could accept, if he had to. He

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could even face the chance of torture by itself, as he had accepted the danger while trying to have his facts published. But to have his mind taken from him, a step at a time — to watch his personality, his ego, rotted away under him — and to know that he would wind up as a drooling idiot . . .

He made his decision, almost as quickly as he had come to realize what Buehl must be.

There was a razor in the medicine chest. It was a safety razor, of course, but the blade was sharp and it would be big enough. There was no time for careful planning. One of the guards might come in at any moment if they thought he was taking too long.

Some fear came back as he leaned over the wash basin, staring at his throat, fingering the suddenly murderous blade. But the pain wouldn't last long — a lot less than there would be under shock treatment, and less pain. He'd read enough to feel sure of that.

Twice he braced himself and failed at the last second. His mind flashed out in wild schemes, fighting against what it knew had to be done.

The world still had to be warned! If he could escape, somehow . . . if he could still find a way . . . He couldn't quit, no matter how impossible things looked.

But he knew better. There was nothing one man could do against the aliens in this world they had taken over. He'd never had a chance. Man had been chained already by carefully developed ridicule against superstition, by carefully indoctrinated gobbledegook about insanity, persecution complexes, and all the rest.

For a second, Dane even considered the possibility that he was insane. But he knew it was only a blind effort to cling to life. There had been no insanity in him when he'd groped for evidence in the coffin and found it empty!

He leaned over the wash basin, his eyes focused on his throat, and his hand came down and around, carrying the razor blade through a lethal semicircle.

DANE Phillips watched fear give place to sickness on his face as the pain lanced through him and the blood spurted.

He watched horror creep up to replace the sickness while the bleeding stopped and the gash began closing.

By the time he recognized his expression as the same one he'd seen on his father's face at the window so long ago, the wound was completely healed.

—LESTER DEL REY

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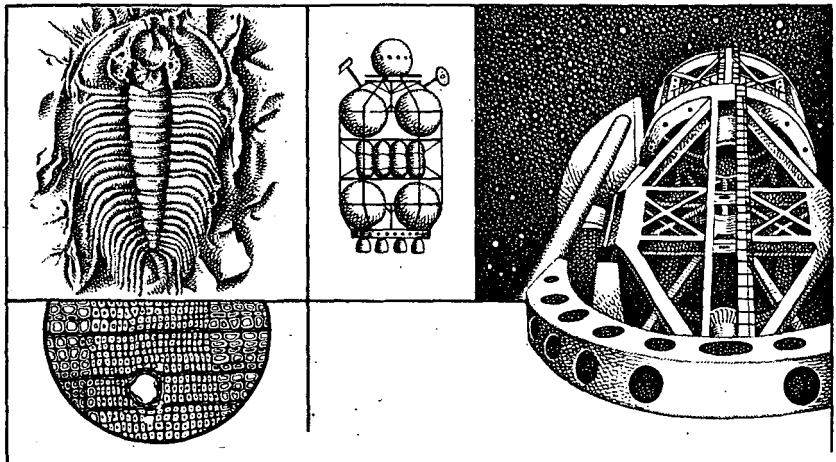
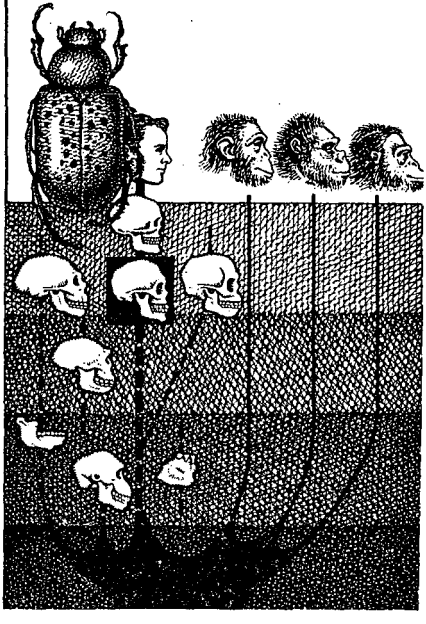


for your information

By WILLY LEY



NO LONGER IMAGINARY

THE words which have to preface this column were written quite a number of years ago, namely around the year 1870. Their author was Jules Verne, but he did not write them for publication, for they occur in a letter he wrote to his father. In the original, they read: *Tout ce qu'un homme est capable d'imaginer, d'autres hommes seront capables de le réaliser,* which

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translates as "everything one man is capable of imagining, other men will be capable of realizing."

In other words, Jules Verne took the position that the imagination of one man, namely the writer, will forecast the shape of things to come. It is too bad that he never wrote an essay on the rôle of science fiction. It would be interesting to see whether he would have analyzed his own contribution not just as something loosely called "imagination," but more precisely as what is now called "extrapolation." Because if you examine just Jules Verne's work carefully, you'll find that he was the extrapolator extraordinary and that his "imagination" was carefully directed into directions given by known facts.

I am not diverging from the theme myself when I tell that it happens quite often to me, usually before lectures, that local newspaper reporters, assigned to a routine interview, try to get some special color into it by asking for a little rundown on things "invented" by science fiction writers. By this they mean devices or machines described with reasonable accuracy first in a story and now reality.

The list of such inventions actually is much shorter than one should think at first glance and so, most of the time, a note of disappointment creeps into the interview rather soon.

SO Jules Verne prophesied the long-range submarine, as everybody knows. In the process of describing its workings, he "invented" the periscope. Then I say: "Yes, and he named his fictional submarine *Nautilus* because that was the name that Robert Fulton had given to his small experimental submarine which he tried in the Seine River in France and which did not have a periscope."

I then want to go on and say that the first atomic submarine received the same name to honor both, but usually I don't get that far because I am interrupted by the surprised question: "You mean to say there actually were functioning subs before Jules Verne's time?" On one occasion, the reporter was so keenly disappointed that he threw this particular sheet of his notes into the wastepaper basket. This, to his mind, was no longer a story.

The fact is, of course, that it *is* the story.

The actual discovery of something new and, as a rule, the first model of a possible practical application of that discovery generally came from a scientist (or, in the past, a professional inventor who may be termed an "applied scientist").

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What the writer like Jules Verne did was to see clearly before his mind's eye what the future of this invention could be. Being a writer, he told it in terms of fictional action. And to the reading public, the facts often became known through the fictionalized version first, so that the public acquired the habit of crediting the writer not only with the story but with the discovery, too.

Actually the scientists came first in the vast majority of all the cases, as was mentioned in this column a few months ago, with reference to cotnra-terrene matter. Ex-editor Sam Moskowitz discovered to his surprise recently that the spaceships of science fiction became rockets only *after* Goddard and Oberth had published their mathematical studies of propulsion in a vacuum.

(There are one and half exceptions to this statement. The Frenchman Achille Eyraud, in 1865, hit on a *moteur à réaction* for his ship and, thirty years later, the German Kurd Lasswitz "invented" a rocket-type propulsion mechanism which he called "repulsor." Lasswitz is the "half exception," for while he wrote about the device in a space-travel novel, he was a scientist in daily life.)

Keeping in mind that the writer, though he does the major job of prophesying, usually gets the fundamental idea from the scientist, we can get down to cases. And I'll begin with the very rare and possibly unique case of one of these "prophets" who was essentially an artist rather than a writer. He happened to be a Frenchman, too; his name was Albert Robida and he was born in 1848. He had his *floruit*, as bibliographers like to put it, around 1882-1883, when he was about 35 years old.

AT that time, the electric telegraph was firmly established, but Heinrich Hertz had not yet discovered the waves at first named after him. Other inventions utilizing electric current had just been born.

Alexander Graham Bell received his patents in 1876 and 1877. In October, 1879, Thomas Alva Edison's electric lamp burned for the first time in his laboratory. Two years prior to that date, Edison had received the first patent for his phonograph.

Somebody who carefully followed the announcements about inventions — we know that Jules Verne did and can safely assume that Robida also did — could know that it was possible to speak over a wire and that sound could be recorded directly, without the detour via the written word. But

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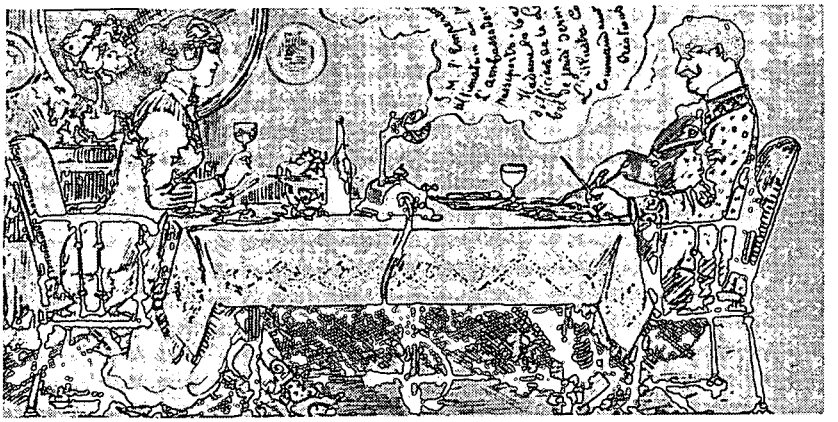

Robida's "spoken newspaper" on the breakfast table. Aside from the old-fashioned design, this looks "normal" to us

no commercial use was really in sight at the moment.

Robida thought of one: the "spoken newspaper" at breakfast time (Fig. 1.), the radio of today. Since the very term newspaper implied reporters, Robida invented the roving reporter complete with microphone (Fig. 2).

Two things are most interesting about this picture. One is the result of the knowledge of the time: The reporter's microphone is not a walkie-talkie, since radio waves were still unknown, so the reporter trails a cable. But Robida put a "magic eye" in his other hand — we would call it a TV camera. Robida must have reasoned by analogy that if sound could be both transmitted and recorded and a picture could be recorded (professional and amateur photographers already numbered many thousands in his day), it seemed likely that a picture might be transmitted, too, in some manner.

As if this single item in the picture of the reporter might not be enough to establish him as the prophet of television with posterity, Robida did portray television in the home (Fig. 3), not quite in a form which is now in use, but close enough to it to eliminate all argument.

It is always said that the tank is an invention of H. G. Wells and was born with his story *The Land Ironclads*, first published in the December, 1903, issue of *The Strand Magazine*. But one can make a strong case for Ro-

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bida, who had tanklike war machines in 1883 (Fig. 4). The one thing against the claim for Robida is that his "tanks" still ran on rails.

There are precisely 20 years between Robida's engines and Wells' "land ironclads." But precisely ten years after the one and ten years prior to the other, namely in 1893, Mr. Frank Reade, Jr., had a tank (Fig. 5) which not only did not need rails, but was even amphibious!

THE next case is one I unfortunately cannot illustrate; it is, to my knowledge, the first air-to-air missile. It appeared on the cover of a German pulp magazine around 1909 or early 1910. I cannot illustrate it for the simple reason that I could not find files of that old magazine (more accurately, "dime novel") in a library.

As I remember the cover, this missile bore a surprising resemblance to the German Henschel Hs-293 air-to-ground missile of

Remote entertainment de luxe in the home, acording to Robida

Robida's roving reporter, trailing wires for sound and picture

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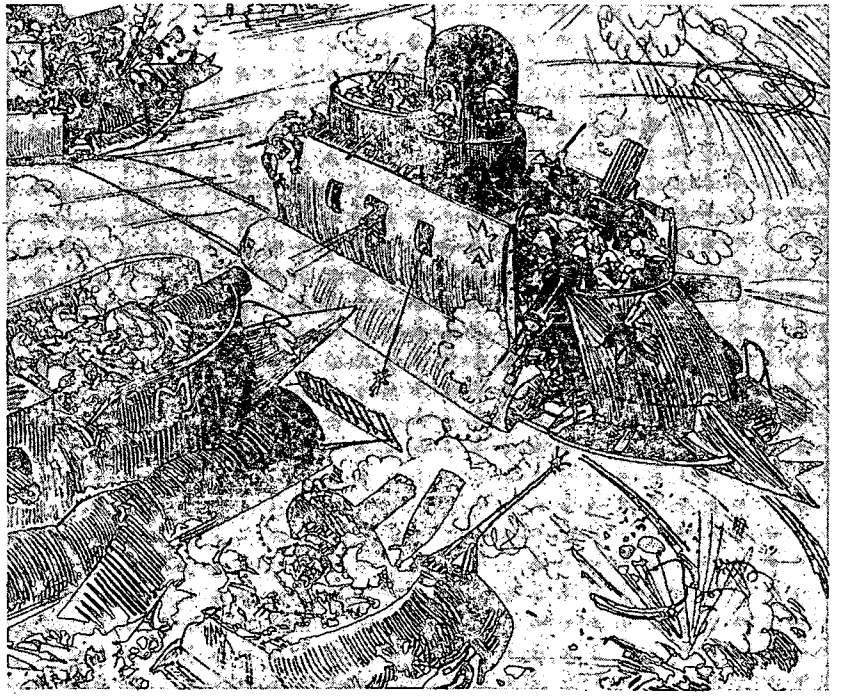

Robida's guess at either the tank or the armored train

the Second World War, but I don't dare to go so far as to print a picture of the Hs-293 and say that this was drawn for the first time in 1909. But I am certain about the story background for the cover painting.

From 1909 till 1914, somebody in Germany wrote science fiction dime novels with the overall title "Captain Mors, Pirate of the Air." Of course, you understand that this Captain Mors was a very benevolent pirate who took from the rich to support the poor.

He made his first appearance with a zeppelin-type airship of astonishing capabilities and declared himself Master of the Air, not permitting anybody else to fly. (Later, after he had built himself an even more astonishing spaceship, he relented somewhat and let others share the air with him.) But at the period when he was still objecting to other people's airships, these other people banded together to blast

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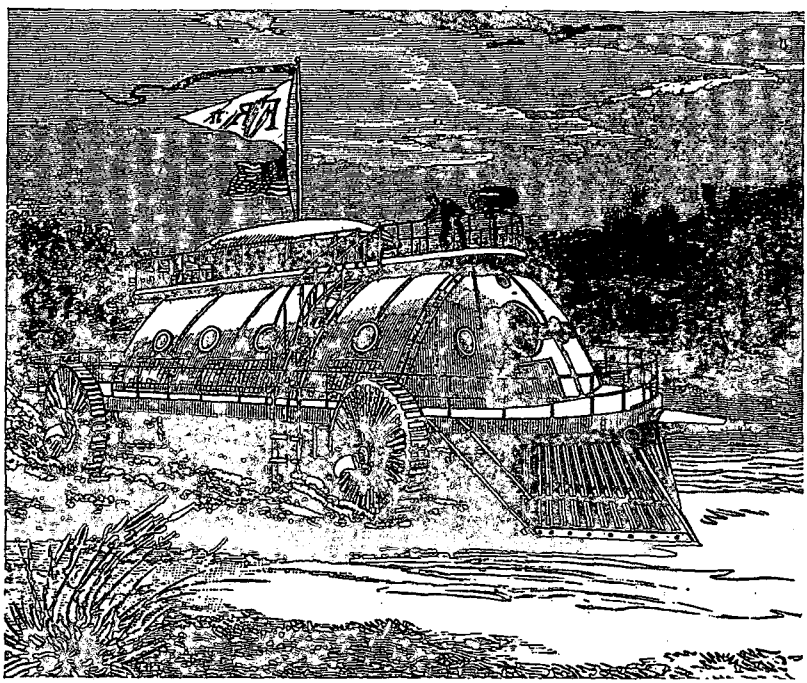

The tank, according to Frank Reade, Jr.

him out of the air.

English, French and Belgian airships attack his ship directly with cannon and machine guns and are easily defeated. But while Captain Mors is occupied in this manner, the Russian airship climbs to a higher altitude so far away that there cannot be any menace from the Russian ship as far as airborne artillery goes.

But the Russians do not carry artillery — they release air-to-air missiles! Captain Mors can save his ship and his skin only by superior speed and frantic and skillful maneuvering.

Even here, though, the author of the story (who wrote anonymously) and his illustrator (equally anonymous) probably received the germ of the idea from practical science. Early in the present century, a Swedish artillery officer, Baron von Unge, had tried to re-introduce the war rocket, first as a ground-to-ground weapon like howitzers. When that

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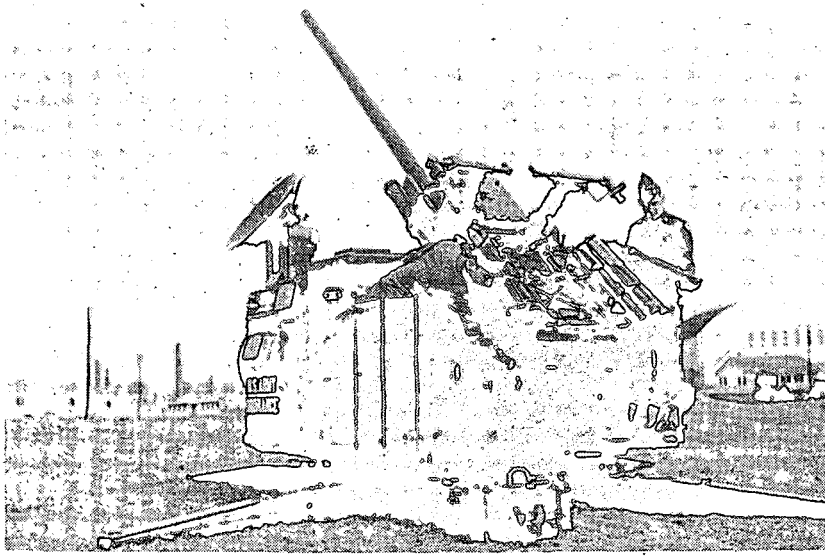

The 75-millimeter Skysweeper automatic cannon which combines radar, flight-track computer and rapid-fire gun

(U. S. Army Photograph)

did not work out too well, he argued that rocket-propelled missiles were the ideal weapons for airships to use against other airships, since both the weight and the recoil of cannon were lacking.

(Note in passing: An American airship inventor, General Thayer, had made it a point that the cannon of his airship should fire in the direction of the tail end of the ship, so that their recoil would aid in the propulsion of the ship.)

The idea of the air-to-air missile had been conceived by the Baron von Unge, but von Unge had unwinged rockets in mind. The anonymous author described (and his illustrator drew) a winged missile which, I seem to remember, was even controlled from the mother ship in some manner. This was evidently a "shot in the dark" which happened to hit.

OTHERS of the kind were yet to come. The science fiction writers of the 1920s were obviously under the influence of the First World War, which had just ended. They wrote tirelessly about future wars and, by inventing a large number of future weapons, they did come up with

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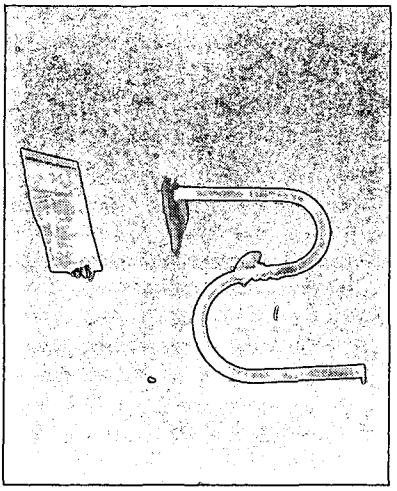
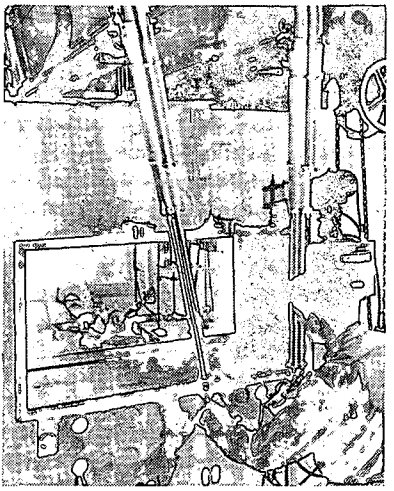


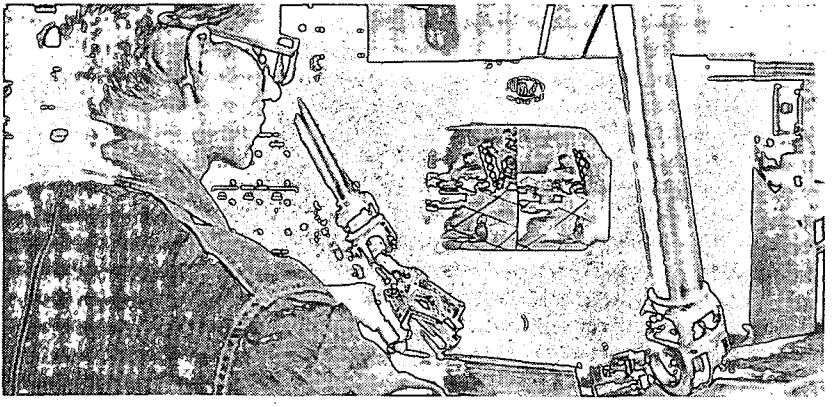
Piping light in complete darkness to illuminate a document
(Courtesy E. I. du Pont de Nemours)



"Manipulators" at work in a contaminated area. The observation is direct through a radiation-proof window
(Oak Ridge National Laboratory)

a few that later became reality.

There was a story, for example, in which one side had automatic artillery which aimed itself at the targets and fired at a rate then equaled only by machine



Same type of "manipulators," but observation is by means of television. The double image on the screen becomes a three-dimensional picture when viewed through polarized spectacles
(Oak Ridge National Laboratory)

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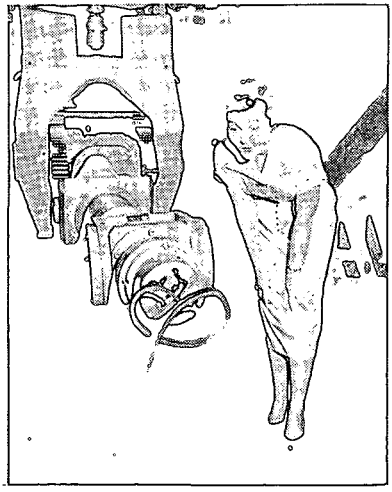
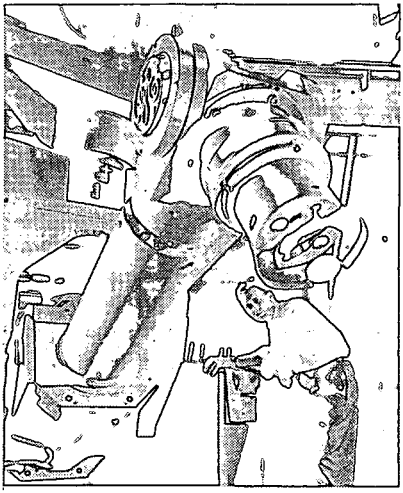
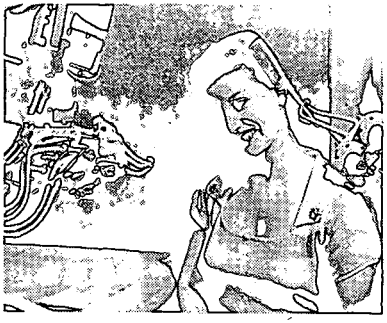
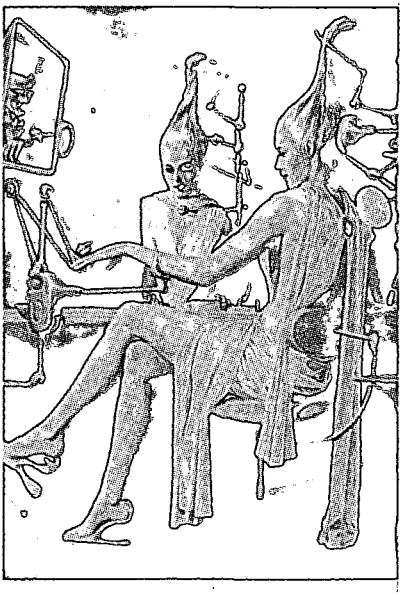




Mechanical arm developed by General Electric is powerful enough to twist an iron bar. But it can also move a raw egg around

(Courtesy General Electric)





The "Yes-Man" beautician at work . . . and some readers felt our January, 1955, cover too fantastic even for science fiction !

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guns. All the gunners had to do was to see to it that the shell-feeding mechanism functioned properly. There is now such a gun (Fig. 6), the Skysweeper.

I have been told that the man who originally wrote the Buck Rogers stories and invented the character made a rather good forecast of the Bazooka in one of his stories. Since I haven't read the story myself, I can only report this as hearsay.

Of course Dr. E. E. Smith can take credit for having predicted radar, with the "detector screens driven with the utmost power." While he did not describe just how the detector screens worked, the similarity between what they were supposed to do and what radar really does is striking.

At one time during the last phase of the Second World War — between VE Day and VJ Day — I loaned a boxful of magazines to somebody who wanted to know what science fiction was. When the magazines were returned to me, there was a long evening of discussion and one of the questions that came up was: "Do you know why Dr. Smith did not say 'radar' when he described the detector screens? Radar is a much better word." Well, I did know.

Now I can't say whether the detector screens were one of these "shots in the dark" or whether Dr. Smith did go by a prior announcement from scientific sources. I don't *think* he did, but he *could* have. About 1906, Guglielmo Marconi delivered a lecture on radio waves and their transmission. He made reference to the fact that radio waves are reflected by solid objects and said that this characteristic might be used, one day, "to detect obstacles at sea either in darkness or in bad weather."

Yes, this lecture was printed; otherwise I wouldn't know about it myself, for when it was originally delivered, I was getting ready to be born.

A VERY typical "shot in the dark" was the repeated mention of unbreakable glass in many stories. That there would be such glass at some time seemed logical. Now we have not one but two substances which fit the label. The one is actually a type of glass, virtually unbreakable. The other is transparent plastic, best known under its trade name of lucite.

Lucite has a strange characteristic which would have made wonderful story material if it had been foreseen. It can be used to "pipe light" around corners (Fig. 7) and the fact that the light-piping rod in the picture is visible at all is due to an "imperfection." If it had an absolutely smooth

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surface, no light would emerge through the sides; the rod would look dark with only a beam coming out of its end.

How science fiction forecast the atomic bomb has been told and retold so many times that I would not even mention it here if it weren't for one thing—namely, the people who tell the story do not seem to be acquainted with the story in which atomic bombs and atomic artillery appeared for really the first time.

I can't recall the name of the author, but the title of the story was *The Final War* and it appeared in one of Hugo Gernsback's magazines. The bombs and shells that end the war are not only "atomic" in the amount of destruction they cause; at one point earlier in the story, an investigator makes specific reference to the "nuclei"—something which was not very meaningful to the readers.

To end on a peaceful note, one of the neatest predictions ever to come out of science fiction is Heinlein's "waldos." If you have read the story, you'll remember that the hero is suffering from extreme muscular weakness of such a pronounced type that he lives on an artificial satellite in free fall around the Earth. To do things, he relies on an invention of his own. He slips his hands into something resembling a pair of gloves and, elsewhere, duplicate hands of different sizes and strengths do with force what the weak hands of the inventor feebly direct.

These "waldos" are with us in considerable number. The first ones I know of were developed for the Atomic Energy Commission for the remote handling of radioactive materials; they received the somewhat stiff name of "manipulators." To make it easy to learn to handle them, they usually have a "1 to 1 power translation." In other words, the mechanical hand inside the radioactive area exerts the same pressure as the operator's real hand on the outside. If you press strongly enough to crush a beaker directly in your hand—not really a recommended procedure—the mechanical hand will crush it, too. But there are mechanical arms in which the power can be stepped up.

THE latest wrinkle in the series of "remote hands" is something that General Electric has named "Yes-Man." At one end there is the "master," a kind of harness with elbows, wrists, hands and fingers.

The "master" is worn by the real master, namely the operator.

At the other end there is the "slave," which is a set of me-

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chanical arms with elbows, wrists, hands and fingers.

"Yes-Man" slave does what the master does. It does not even have to be near. The "master" could be directed in New York and the "slave" could perform in Boston. Moreover, there could be "slaves" in Chicago, San Francisco, Hollywood and Palm Beach all doing what the "master in New York is doing."

This, Moscow may say, is what Wall Street always wanted. Seriously, the "Yes-Man" is also designed to work in either radioactive or otherwise unhealthy areas. It could be used in a room which is filled with live steam, 600 degrees hot. It could perform in a room where a container filled with a poisonous gas has burst. It could be used to de-fuze a shell or bomb. And since there could be hundreds of slaves hooked up to one master, it might be used in some instances for assembly operations requiring long practice.

So far, all this has been pretty serious. The ending in a lighter vein was created, or at least unveiled, just a few days before I started writing the column for this issue.

Remember the Liquor Organ which was such an essential ingredient in a series of Kuttner stories? Well, it now exists. There now *is* a mechanical bartender where you only have to push a few buttons—I am told that the combinations are easy to learn—to get the drink you want in the mixture ratio you prefer. All you have to do, in addition to pushing buttons, is to see that the attachments which hold the bottles do hold bottles with something in them.

But there is a drawback to everything.

The thing costs four thousand dollars, which makes it one of the cases where human help is decidedly cheaper.

—WILLY LEY

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VIGIL

By E. C. TUBB

I could help him, that old man waiting patiently on the Moon — but not after what I had done!

WE HIT the Moon just as the terminator was bisecting Tycho. It was a pretty sight with the sharp, black-ink shadows etched across the plains and the tips of the mountains limned with light, but to me it was bad timing. Landing isn't as hard as it used to be and the automatics have taken the danger from a nightside touchdown, but I liked to see where I was going. So I orbited a couple of times until the land field was clear, then killed velocity, swung up the nose and let the ground-based radar pilot take over.

We hardly felt the shock of landing.

Dumarest was, as usual, eager to stretch his legs. French, the third member of the crew, packed his instruments, completed his log and, by the time Dumarest had damped the pile and made all secure, was ready for the monitor.

Illustrated by FINLAY

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I joined them at the airlock with the cargo manifests, log and ship's papers in their folder under my arm. None of us carried much in the way of baggage, for weight was still an item on the ships and there was no profit in paying for excess.

The monitor crawled from the station toward us, rammed the plastic union against the hull over the airlock, signaled and waited for us to unseal and enter. Herman was the driver and he nodded to me as I sat beside him.

"Good trip?"

"The usual." I watched as the maintenance crew entered the ship and shut the door behind them. Herman dogged shut our compartment, hit the bleed-valve and, as the air spilled from the union, pulled free of the ship and headed toward the station.

THE cargo monitors passed us, going in the opposite direction, before we had gone halfway. They crawled over the dust on their way to the ship, big, ungainly things, but far better than the old days when cargo had to be man-handled by men in spacesuits. Now it was an easy ship-to-monitor-to-storage-dome, with men working in air all the time. I guessed that it would only be a matter of time before the ships themselves were brought within a dome, too.

Nobody spoke on the ride to the station. To Herman, it was routine; to us, it was the end of a journey, with the inevitable letdown at the end of anticipation. For a couple of weeks, we would loaf, drink, talk, see what sights were to be seen, maybe even take a trip down to Earth. Then back into space again, to Mars or Venus or maybe Mercury, interplanetary bus-drivers wet-nursing a cargo of supplies and machinery on the way out and valuable minerals on the way in. I'd done it for fifteen years and it was like living at the bottom of an ever-deepening rut.

"I wonder if he's there," said Dumarest. The monitor had stopped within the outer dome and he led the way out.

French shrugged. "I guess so, unless he's dead. What do you think, Frank?"

I didn't answer.

"Every trip the same," said Dumarest. "It's getting so I expect old man Thorne to be waiting for me. It's like seeing the Earth, something you get to rely on."

We passed from the entry port into Reception.

"He's there," said Dumarest. "Just the same as always." He chuckled. "Good old Thorne, he never lets you down."

Thorne stood by the exit of Reception, just within the short corridor leading to the living quar-

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ters. A thin, withered scrap of a man, his shoulders stooped despite the low gravity, his hair in fading brown streaks over his balding skull, his eyes as soft and wistful as those of an unwanted puppy.

I felt those eyes on me while I handed the manifests to one official, the ship's papers to another. They followed as I stepped into the Medic's cubicle for a radiation check and they were waiting for me when I came out to clear Customs.

Soft eyes, patient eyes, eyes that stared at everyone who landed on the Moon. For everyone landing on the Moon had to pass through Reception and everyone heading for Earth had to arrive at Tycho.

Most never gave him a second thought. Some, like Dumarest, wondered and perhaps built elaborate theories to account for his presence. I knew just why he stood where he did and stared at endless faces with his soft, patient eyes.

He was waiting for his son.

"FRANK." He stepped forward as I was about to pass him, one thin hand resting on my arm, the soft eyes asking the eternal question.

I shook my head. "No luck. Sorry."

"No passengers? No one else on board? Nobody at all, Frank?"

"Just the three of us." I looked at Dumarest and French as they passed us, heading to a hotel, a shower, a complete relaxation from ship routine. Some crews stuck together during leaves, but ours wasn't one of them. I knew I wouldn't see them again, unless by accident, until time came for takeoff.

"And no ships due for three days." Thorne let his hand fall from my arm. He knew the flight schedules as well as the dispatchers did. "Did you—on Mars, I mean?"

"We landed at Holmston," I said. "We were there two days, just long enough to unload and take on cargo. I know every man and woman in the settlement."

"Of course." He blinked and looked abashed. "I just thought that maybe . . ."

"Be reasonable," I said. "Mars isn't like the Sahara. A man can't wander over the deserts for years, just like that. He can't live away from the settlements, no food, no water, not even enough air."

"No, I suppose not." He moved beside me as I walked down the passage. I didn't want his company, but I didn't know how to tell him that. I had spoken to him first from pity, then from habit, now from duty. Always my reports were the same, but always he accepted what I said with the

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mental reservation that I must be wrong.

I anticipated his next question. "Nor on Venus. Conditions there are about like Mars. You live in a settlement or you don't live at all."

"Mercury?"

"Not a chance."

We had reached the end of the corridor and the avenues of the dome stretched out before us. I headed for the official cubicles, paid for a key and led the way down the passage. The cubicle was small, cramped, containing only a cot, a chair and a locker. It was more like a cell than anything else, but it was cheap. I threw my baggage onto the cot and turned to the old man.

"You're wasting your time, Thorne. Why don't you admit it?"

"I can't." He sat on the chair and looked at his hands. "You don't understand — no one does — but I've got to see Tony again."

"Why?"

"There's something I want to say to him."

"That all?" My voice must have expressed my feelings, for he looked up at me.

"No," he said quietly. "That isn't all. He is my son."

IT WAS the way he said it rather than what he said. It was the voice of a dedicated man and there could be no arguing with it. I unzipped my bag, took out a few toilet articles, a change of underwear and some personal junk that I carried around, and spread the things about the cubicle. I didn't look at the old man; if he wanted to talk, he would talk. I hoped he wouldn't.

"Sixteen years," he said. "It's a long time."

"Too long," I said. "He's probably been dead for years."

"No!" The denial was so emphatic, it hurt.

"Why not?" I was losing patience. "Lots of men died in the early days. How can you be sure that he wasn't one of them?"

"I've tracked down the record of every man who died off Earth." He smiled at my expression. "It took money, Frank, but I'm not poor and I'd spend every penny I owned if I could just see my boy once more."

I didn't say anything. There was nothing I could say, but I wished the old man would get up and leave me. He didn't; instead, he told me all about it. I wished he hadn't.

Tony Thorne was young, wild, with a dream in his heart and starlight in his eyes. His mother was dead; his father refused to give him up and so denied him permission to enlist in Space School. So young Tony had stolen all the money he could lay his hands on and had run away from

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home. A simple, sordid, sixteen-year-old story. Nothing unique about it in the slightest—nothing, that is, aside from the sequel.

"I want to forgive him," said the old man. "I've tried to forget him, but I can't. I keep thinking of him somewhere out in space or on one of the planets. Married, perhaps, and with children of his own—my grandchildren. I want to find him and tell him that I understand and forgive." He looked at me with those soft, patient eyes. "Can you understand?"

"I can understand how you feel," I said carefully. "But can you understand how he might feel? He ran away from home sixteen years ago and has never written. Have you thought that maybe he doesn't want to see you?"

"He could be afraid. That might be it. I was pretty hard in the old days."

"Sixteen years is a long time," I insisted. "A man can forget a lot during that time."

"But not his father."

"You're the man who turned him into a criminal because you wanted your own way. Now, because age has made you sentimental, you want to find him and tell him how sorry you are that it all happened. You know what I think? I think you're plain damned selfish."

"Maybe I am," he said slowly. "I guess all old parents are." He studied me. "How old are you, Frank?"

"Thirty-three. Why?"

"Tony would be that age on his next birthday." He had already forgotten most of what I had said. "He would look a lot like you—same hair, same eyes."

HE sighed and shook his head. "I suppose you never met him while at school?"

"No."

"Are you sure? He was big for his age, good at athletics. He had dark hair and when he smiled, it was like the Sun breaking through clouds."

"What do you think the early days were like, Thorne?" I forced him to meet my eyes. "The Government schools were fine, sure, but what about the kids who couldn't get in and had to buy their way into space? They learned or they died. Those days are over now and everything is nicely regulated and safe, but it was hell while it lasted. You think your son will thank you for something like that?"

"It was his own choosing," Thorne said.

"No, it was what you forced him to do." I drew a deep breath. "Anyway, you can't even be sure that he ever went into space."

"He went into space," said the old man. "That was why he stole

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the money, to bribe his way into Space School. I'm sure of that."

"And that's why you stand in Reception watching everyone who lands?"

He made a helpless gesture. "It's all I can do. I'm too old to go on the search myself; the Medics wouldn't pass me. Tony may have changed his name, anything, and no one would know. But one day he'll come back home. When he does, I'll be waiting."

"You're crazy." I stood up and walked the two paces to the end of the cubicle. I gazed at the wall, smooth metal, then turned to face the old man. "Crazy! Do you hear? You've stood there for how long? Two years? Three? And still he hasn't come. Why don't you go home?"

"I'm here to stay. My heart wouldn't stand the trip." He rose to his feet, very old, very pathetic, and reached for the door.

"So you're here until you die, is that it?"

"Yes, Frank," he said quietly. "That's about it."

"And you're going to stand there in Reception and stare at everyone landing on the Moon. You're going to do that year after year so that, every time I land, you'll be waiting. Right?"

"Yes," he said again. "That's right."

"Get out," I said. "Get out and leave me alone."

THE cubicle seemed more like a cell than ever after he had gone. I sat down for a while, then, collecting my toilet things, went down the passage to the communal washroom. I showered, shaved and did all the things which are supposed to make a man feel fresh and glad to be alive, but for me they were just wasting time.

Returning to the cubicle, I changed into my spare uniform and went out. Entertainment on the Moon consisted mostly of indoor sports, though an enterprising firm offered mountaineering and dust-skiing, neither of which interested me in the slightest. I had a couple of drinks in a bar and was finishing the second when I saw Dumarest. He glanced through the door, saw me, hesitated and then moved on. I wasn't surprised; Dumarest was a drinking man and found little enjoyment in my company.

On board, where there was no alcohol, I could afford to relax. In a bar, knowing how liquor loosened tongues, I dared be nothing but careful.

I'd had to be careful for sixteen years.

I took two more solitary drinks in two different bars and finally, feeling the warmth of the liquor in my stomach, slipped coins into the slot of a tridi and entered the darkened theatre.

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The movie was a regular heart-wringer about a little boy, his dog and a white-haired old mother. The plot was nothing, the scenery everything, and I sniffed the scent of pines and heard the thin whisper of wind through the trees, saw the stately movement of fleecy clouds and even felt the sprayed moisture of synthetic rain on my face and hands.

For a while, I was back on Earth, among the green, growing things of the planet where I had been born. The planet I hadn't visited for almost half my life.

The tridi turned sour. The eyes of the dog reminded me of the eyes of Thorne. The white-haired old mother reminded me of the silent, watchful, ever-hoping man who stood in Reception. The kid, with his dark hair and the smile like the Sun breaking through the clouds, made me remember things best left forgotten.

Back in the cubicle, I sat on the cot and stared at the metal walls.

The likeness to a jail cell was unintentional, but it was there. The only difference between the room in which I sat and an actual cell was that I could, at any time, open the door and leave.

Leave to enter another cell, the cell of a spaceship bound for the planets, a metal egg which held a man more securely than any prison.

I SHOOK my head and glared into the mirror facing the locker. It was a full-length mirror and it gave a good view. I glowered at the man reflected there, the seamed face, the graying hair, the haunted eyes. The eyes which held a secret that had to be kept.

Some men can commit a crime and forget it. Others, forced into crime for the sake of an ideal, punish themselves all their lives. Before Thorne had come, it had been bad, but now it was getting unbearable. Every time I landed, I could feel those soft, patient eyes and know that I and I alone could end his vigil. And he would stay there all his life, watching, watching, meeting me at the end of every trip. And, on the Moon, men live a long, long time.

Cursing did no good, but I cursed all the same. Cursing the accident of chance which had thrown me, a space-mad youngster, into the company of a runaway kid with the same dream — but with the money to turn that dream into reality. Cursing the rock, the thin skull, the blood-money which had bought me sixteen years of hell.

And his father's watching eyes.

— E. C. TUBB

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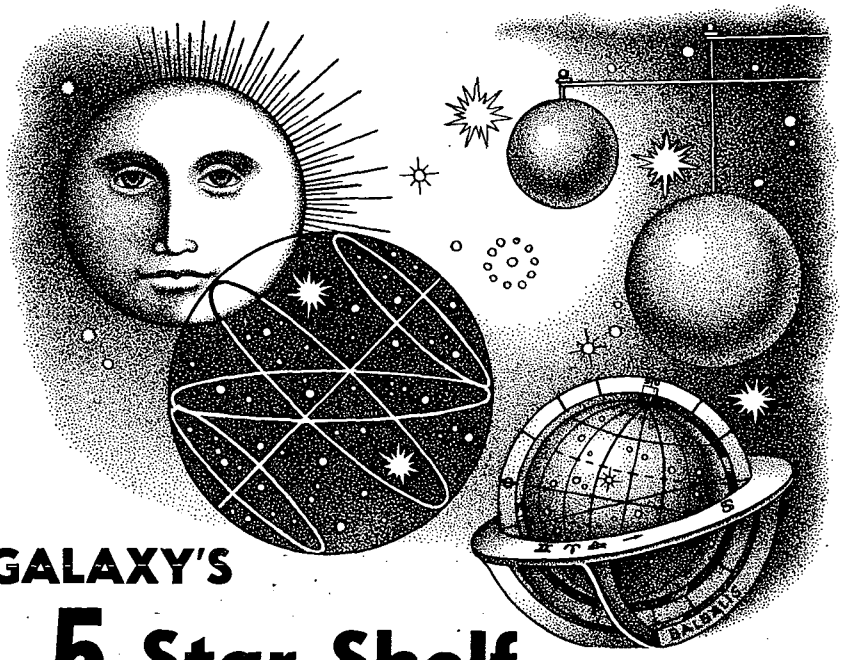

GALAXY'S 5 Star Shelf

FORBIDDEN AREA by Pat Frank. J. B. Lippincott., Phila. & N. Y. $3.50

UNDOUBTEDLY a good many of you remember Frank's slapsticky *Mr. Adam* of a few years back. Well, relax . . . or rather, prepare to tense up, because his current book is as different as *Dracula* and Joe Miller.

It is a murder story — not a mystery, because we are informed of identities at the outset. Also, it is a true horror yarn because the victim is sufficiently powerful to thwart any attempt, but remains uncomprehendingly inert while the murderous plans unfold.

Who is the victim? The U.S.A.

Like last month's *Two Rubles to Times Square*, the author envisions a Soviet school turning out completely Americanized agents. Four of them are landed on the Florida coast to infiltrate into the Strategic Air Command and sabotage the newest long-range bombers into being grounded. Once this happens, of course, the U.S. cannot retaliate against attack with any strength.

If you have had any exper-

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ience with the military chain of command, you'll find yourself shackled to this book right to the end.

MACHINE TRANSLATION OF LANGUAGES, edited by William N. Locke and A. Donald Booth. Technology Press and John Wiley & Sons, Inc., N. Y. $6.00

IN many yarns, from E. E. Smith's *Skylark* on, authors have circumvented communication problems by means of trick gadgets that take in alien lingoes and turn out English. We accepted it for the sake of story continuity, but it always took a strong swallow. The real surprise, though, is that there is considerable progress already in adapting electronic brains to the problem!

A fascinating subject, indeed, but the series of essays in this book are for engineers or serious students of linguistics, not laymen.

1999 *OUR HOPEFUL FUTURE by Victor Cohn. The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., Indianapolis & N. Y.* $3.75

WHAT a difference when a professional takes over from amateurs!

Last month, we had a staggeringly impressive list of prognosticators writing in *The Fabulous Future*. Of course, they only went as far as 1980, but it's almost certain that we'll hit the limits of their vision long before then.

Cohn, however, opens a vista that looks like a reckless pipe dream — and proceeds to show how all this is either already in the labs or on the drawing board. And far from producing a dry essay, Cohn has interjected fascinating glimpses into the daily routine of Mr. Future before each chapter.

THE BRIGHT PHOENIX by Harold Mead. Ballantine Books, N. Y. $2.00

ENGLAND bequeathed us such gems as Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *1984*. Mead follows in their footsteps with a powerful story reminiscent of both yarns, but strongly individualistic in his treatment of a regimented future society.

The period is unspecified, but mankind has fought its way back from barbarism after a war to the point where it requires *lebensraum* once again. An explorer has been sent to The Island to report on colonization possibilities. A new race of perfect physical specimens has been bred for this specific purpose. His report is favorable and colonization proceeds.

However, his prolonged absence

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from civilization has so warped his outlook on the holiness of the state that he is a ripe subject for reconditioning. The conflict between the Reconditioneds, the Colonists and the Islanders is presented with a savage power that is unusual in a first novel.

ATLANTIS – THE MYSTERY UNRAVELLED by Jürgen Spanuth. The Citadel Press, N. Y. $4.00

I HOPE Willy Ley takes this volume under advisement to pass on the historical merits of its argument, for the basic premise is a gripping one and its logic is too convincing for anybody but an expert to assess.

Spanuth puts forth the startling theory that Atlantis is not to be found in the various places previously assumed, but in the North Sea off Schleswig-Holstein, near Heligoland. He bases this on Plato's *Dialogues* and certain inscriptions on the walls of the temple of Medinet Habu, erected by Ramses III to celebrate his victory over the North people. They are depicted with horned helmets and are described as excellent seamen.

He reasons further that there is an enormous chronological error in the dating of the Atlantis catastrophe — the computation was made in years, whereas, even today, the Egyptians reckon in months. The error, then, lay in considering Atlantis as falling in 12,000 B.C. instead of 1,200 B.C.

Worldwide cataclysms swept the Earth at that time and the Atlanteans were forced from their inundated home. Far from being disorganized, however, they were superbly equipped and had a navy of 1200 vessels. They swept over Europe in their march to the Egyptian border, being repulsed only by the ancient Atheneans until their utter defeat by the Egyptians.

True or not, the presentation of Spanuth's theory reads like authentic history.

BETWEEN THE PLANETS by Fletcher G. Watson. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, $5.00

ON occasion, the little members of the Solar System far outdistance the bigger in spectacularity. If you've ever watched a meteor shower or traced the path of a comet, you know how exciting they can be. Professor Watson's revision of his 1941 text brings his study of these heavenly wanderers up to date with the latest techniques of photographic and radio observation.

No amateur astronomer can find a better one-volume guide to the celestial hobo jungle.

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MAN UNDER THE SEA by James Dugan. Harper & Bros., N. Y., $5.00
MAN AND THE UNDERWATER WORLD by Pierre de Latil and Jean Rivoire. G. P. Putnam's Sons, N. Y. $5.00

AT the time that Man is making his greatest progress in piercing the space frontier, he has also made tremendous strides in expanding his knowledge of a much closer barrier, the sea. This is evidenced by the number of books on the subject flooding the market.

It almost appears as if the authors of these two books agreed to divide up spheres of influence. In spite of the considerable length of both books, there is very little overlap in coverage of events. Both contain fascinating accounts of Man's age-long efforts to understand and conquer the cruel element.

The French book is written more from the vantage-point of the naturalist, whereas Dugan has devoted himself more to the material aspects of Man's interest in the sea, delineating the progress in diving appurtenances from antiquity to the present and their use in salvage.

De Latil and Rivoire, however, have had intimate contact with the pioneers of the skin-diving technique and have drawn some fine word-pictures of this habit-forming new sport that may have you hocking the family jewels for an Aqualung all your own.

Both volumes are copiously illustrated and will dress up your non-fiction shelf.

FLYING SAUCERS AND COMMON SENSE, by Waveney Girvan. The Citadel Press, N. Y. $3.00

LIKE Jürgen Spanuth elsewhere in this column, Girvan makes a strong case for his specialty. In case you didn't know, he is the British publisher of Heard's *Riddle of the Flying Saucers* and Adamski's *Flying Saucers Have Landed.* And, as you'd expect, he has had access to more interplanetary platter reports than you can shake a head at.

He states that, at the outset of the saucer controversy, he was infected with the will-not-to-believe until testimony became so overwhelming that he lost his resistance. He stresses the point that he himself has not been a witness of a visitation, but that the plethora of accounts by unimpeachable witnesses has resulted in a will-to-believe. Understandable—but the title's promise of common sense is not fulfilled.

—FLOYD C. GALE

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DOUBLE DARE

By ROBERT SILVERBERG

Pride leadeth to worse than a fall . . . it sticketh men out on a limb and keepeth them there!

BY THE time the spaceship had finished jiggling and actually stood firmly on Domerangi soil, Justin Marner was beginning to doubt his sanity.

"We must be crazy," he said. "We *must* be."

The other Earthman, who had been gazing out the viewplate at the green-and-gold alien vista, glanced around suddenly at Marner's remark. "Huh?"

"There are limits to which one goes in proving a point," Marner said. He indicated the scene outside. "This little journey exceeds the limits. Now that we're here, Kemridge, I'm sure of it. *Nobody* does things like this."

Kemridge shrugged sourly. "Don't be silly, Justin. You know why we're here, and you know how come we're here. This isn't any time to —"

"All right," Marner said. "I take it all back." He stared for a mo-

Illustrated by DICK FRANCIS

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ment at his delicate, tapering fingers — the fingers that could have belonged to a surgeon, were they not the property of a top-rank technical engineer. "Don't pay any attention to whatever I just said. It's the strain that's getting me."

The door of the cabin chimed melodiously.

"Come in," said Kemridge.

THE door slid open and a Domerangi, clad in a bright yellow sash, gray-green buskins and a glittering diadem of precious gems, stepped heavily into the cabin. He extended two of his five leathery tentacles in welcome.

"Hello, gentlemen. I see you've come through the trip in fine shape."

"What's going on now, Plorvash?" Marner asked.

"The ship has landed at a spaceport just outside the city," the alien said. "I've come to take you to your quarters. We're giving you two the finest accommodations our planet can offer. We want your working conditions to be of the best."

"Glad to hear it." Marner flicked a glance at his companion. "They're most considerate, aren't they, Dave?"

The taller of the two Earthmen nodded gravely. "Definitely."

Plorvash grinned. "Suppose you come with me now. You would like to be well rested before you undertake your task. After all, you should be at your best, since planetary pride is at stake."

"Of course," Marner said.

"The test will begin as soon as you wish. May I offer you good luck?"

"We won't need it," Kemridge stated grimly. "It's not a matter of luck at all. It's brains — brains and sweat."

"Very well," Plorvash said. "This is what you're here to prove. It ought to be amusing, in any case — whatever the outcome may be."

Both Earthmen tried to look calm and confident, absolutely sure of themselves and their skill.

They merely managed to look rigidly worried.

STATISTICIANS have no records on the subject, but it is an observed phenomenon that the most serious differences of opinion generally originate in bars. It had been in a bar at Forty-sixth and Sixth that Justin Marner had ill-advisedly had words with a visiting Domerangi, a month before, and it had been in the same bar that the train of events which had brought the two Earthmen to Domerang V had started — and never stopped gaining momentum.

It had been a simple altercation at first. Marner had been re-

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flectively sipping a whiskey sour, and Kemridge, seated to his left with his long legs uncomfortably scrunched up, had been toying with a double scotch. The Domerangi had entered the bar with a characteristically ponderous stride.

Though contact with Domerang V had been made more than a century before, Domerangi were still rare sights in New York. Marner and Kemridge knew this one, though — he was attached to the Domerangi Consulate on Sixty-sixth and Third, and they had had dealings with him a year ago in the matter of some circuit alignments for the building's lighting system. Domerangi, with their extraordinary peripheral vision, prefer subdued, indirect lighting, and Marner and Kemridge had designed the lighting plot for the Consulate.

The Domerangi spotted them immediately and eased his bulk onto the stool next to them. "Ah, the two clever engineers," the alien rumbled. "You remember me, of course?"

"Yes," Marner said quickly. "How's the lighting job working out?"

"As well as could be expected." The Domerangi waved toward the bartender. "Barkeep! Two beers, please."

"What do you mean by that?" Kemridge demanded as the beers were drawn and set on the bar.

"Just one moment, please." The alien curled two tentacles gently around the beers and poured one into each of the two feeding-mouths at the sides of his face. "Marvelous liquid, your beer. The one point where Earth is clearly superior to Domerang is in brewing."

"To get back to the lights —" Kemridge prodded.

"Oh, yes," the alien said. "The lights. Well, they're a pretty fair job — as good as we could have hoped for, from a second-rate technology."

"Now hold on a minute!" Marner said hotly, and that was how it started.

"I WISH we'd kept our mouths shut," Marner said glumly. He stared balefully at the spotless ceiling of the hotel room in which the Domerangi had installed them.

Kemridge whirled and glared down at the smaller man. "Listen, Justin: we're here and we're going to show them up and go home rich and famous. Got that?"

"Okay," Marner said. He ran a finger along his thin lower lip. "I'm sorry I keep popping off like this. But it does seem screwy to have gone to this extent just to prove a point that came up in a barroom debate."

"I know. But we wouldn't have

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come here if the State Department hadn't heard about the argument and thought it needed settling. The Domerangi have been acting lordly about their technology as long as we've known them. I think it's a great idea to send a couple of honest-to-Christmas Terran engineers up here to show them once and for all who's got what it takes."

"But suppose we *don't* show them?"

"We will! Between the two of us, we can match anything they throw at us. Can't we?"

Marner smiled gloomily. "Sure we can," he said without conviction. "I haven't doubted it for one minute."

Kemridge walked to the door and, with a swift searching motion of his fingers, found the plate that covered the door mechanism. He unclipped it.

"Look in here, for example," he said, after a moment's scrutiny. "Simple cybernetic mechanism. I don't quite figure the way this green ceramic relay down here controls the power flow, but it's nothing we couldn't dope out, given a screwdriver and a little spare time."

Marner stood on tip-toes and peered in. "Perfectly understandable gadget," he commented. "Not nearly as efficient as our kind, either."

"That's just the point," Kemridge said. "These Domerangi aren't half the sharks they think they are. We stipulated that we could duplicate anything they gave us, right? With our natural savvy and a little perspiration, we ought to be able to match the best gadget they test us with. If we follow through up here and those two Domerangi engineers on Earth mess up their half of the test, then we've done it. The State Department's counting on our versatility. That's all we need, Justin – cleverness!"

Marner's eyes lit up. "Dave, I'm sorry I was so pig-headed a minute ago. We'll give them the business, all right!"

He stood up a little higher and gingerly extended a hand into the gaping servomechanism in the wall.

"What are you doing?" Kemridge asked.

"Never mind. Get on the phone and tell Plorvash that we'll be ready to get to work tomorrow. While you're doing that, I want to fool with this relay. Might as well get some practice now!" He was radiant with new-found enthusiasm.

WHEN Plorvash knocked on the door the following morning, the mood was still on them. They were clear-eyed, wide awake and firmly convinced they could master any problem.

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"Who's there?" Marner asked loudly.

"Me," the Domerangi said. "Plorvash."

Instantly the door flew open and the dumfounded alien chargé-d'affaires was confronted with the sight of the two Earthmen still snug in their beds. He peered behind the door and in the closet.

"Who opened the door?" he asked suspiciously.

Marner sat up in bed and grinned. "Try it again. Go outside and call out 'Plorvash' the way you just did."

The alien lumbered out, pulling the door shut behind him. When he was outside, he said his name again and the door opened immediately. He thundered across the threshold and looked from Marner to Kemridge. "What did you do?"

"We were experimenting with the door-opener last night," Kemridge said. "And before we put it back together, we decided it might be fun to rig up a modified vocoder circuit that would open the door automatically at the sound of the syllables 'Plorvash' directed at it from outside. It works very nicely."

The alien scowled. "Ah — yes. Very clever. Now as to the terms of this test you two are to engage in: we've prepared a fully equipped laboratory for you in Central Sqorvik — that's a suburb not far from here — and we've set up two preliminary problems for you, as agreed. When you've dealt with those — *if* you've dealt with those — we'll give you a third."

"And if we don't deal with them successfully?"

"Why, then you'll have failed to demonstrate your ability."

"Reasonable enough," Marner said. "But just when do we *win* this thing? Do you go on giving us projects till we miss?"

"That would be the ultimate proof of your ability, wouldn't it?" Plorvash asked. "But you'll be relieved to know that we have no such plans. According to the terms of the agreement between ourselves and your government, the test-groups on each planet will be required to carry out no more than three projects." The alien's two mouths smiled unpleasantly. "We'll consider successful completion of all three projects as ample proof of your ability."

"I don't like the way you say that," Kemridge objected. "What's up your sleeve?"

"My sleeve? I don't believe I grasp the idiom," Plorvash said.

"Never mind. Just a Terran expression," said Kemridge.

A CAR was waiting for them outside the hotel — a long, low job with a pulsating flexible hood that undulated in a distress-

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ing fashion, like a monstrous metal artery.

Plorvash slid the back door open. "Get in. I'll take you to the lab to get started."

Marner looked at the alien, then at Kemridge. Kemridge nodded. "How about one for the road?" Marner suggested.

"Eh?"

"Another idiom," he said. "I mean a drink. Alcoholic beverage. Stimulant of some kind. You catch?"

The alien grinned nastily. "I understand. There's a dispensary on the next street. We don't want to rush you on this thing, anyway." He pointed to the moving roadway. "Get aboard and we'll take a quick one."

They followed the Domerangi onto the moving strip and a moment later found themselves in front of a domed structure planted just off the roadway.

"It doesn't look very cozy," Kemridge commented as they entered. A pungent odor of ether hit their nostrils. Half a dozen Domerangi were lying on the floor, holding jointed metal tubes. As they watched, Plorvash clambered down and sprawled out on his back.

"Come, join me," he urged. "Have a drink." He reached for a tube that slithered across the floor toward him and fitted it into his left feeding mouth.

"This is a bar?" Kemridge asked unhappily. "It looks more like the emergency ward of a hospital."

Plorvash finished drinking and stood up, wiping a few drops of green liquid from his jaw. "Good," he said. "It's not beer, but it's good stuff. I thought you two wanted to drink."

Marner sniffed the ether-laden air in dismay and shook his head. "We're not — thirsty. It takes time to get used to alien customs, I suppose."

"I suppose so," Plorvash agreed. "Very well, then. Let's go to the lab, shall we?"

THE laboratory was, indeed, a sumptuous place. The two Earthmen stood at the entrance to the monstrous room and marveled visibly.

"We're impressed," Marner said finally to the Domerangi.

"We want to give you every opportunity to succeed," Plorvash said. "This is just as important for us as it is for you."

Marner took two or three steps into the lab and glanced around. To the left, an enormous oscilloscope wiggled greenly at him. The right-hand wall was bristling with elaborate servomechanisms of all descriptions. The far wall was a gigantic toolchest and workbenches were spotted here and there. The lighting — indirect, of

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course — was bright and eye-easing. It was the sort of research setup a sane engineer rarely bothers even to dream of.

"You're making it too easy for us," said Kemridge. "It can't be hard to pull off miracles in a lab like this."

"We are honest people. If you can meet our tests, we'll grant that you're better than we are. *If* you can, that is. If you fail, it can't be blamed on poor working conditions."

"Fair enough," Kemridge agreed. "When are you ready to start?"

"Immediately." Plorvash reached into the bagging folds of his sash and withdrew a small plastic bubble, about four inches long, containing a creamy-white fluid.

"This is a depilator," he said. He squeezed a few drops out of the bubble into the spoonlike end of one tentacle and rubbed the liquid over the thick, heavy red beard that sprouted on his lower jaw. A streak of beard came away as he rubbed. "It is very useful." He handed the bubble to Marner. "Duplicate it."

"But we're engineers, not chemists," Marner protested.

"Never mind, Justin." Kemridge turned to the alien. "That's the first problem. Suppose you give us the second one at the same time, just to make things more convenient. That way, we'll each have one to work on."

PLORVASH frowned. "You want to work on two projects at once? All right." He turned, strode out and returned a few moments later, carrying something that looked like a large mousetrap inside a cage. He handed it to Kemridge.

"We use this to catch small house pests," Plorvash explained. "It's a self-baiting trap. Most of our house pests are color-sensitive and this trap flashes colors as a lure. For example, it does this to trap vorks —" he depressed a lever in the back and the trap glowed a lambent green — "and this to catch flaibs." Another lever went down and the trap radiated warm purple. An unmistakable odor of rotting vegetation emanated from it as well.

"It is, as you see, most versatile," the alien went on. "We've supplied you with an ample number of vermin of different sorts — they're at the back of the lab, in those cages — and you ought to be able to rig a trap to duplicate this one. At least, I hope you can."

"Is this all?" Kemridge asked.

Plorvash nodded. "You can have all the time you need. That was the agreement."

"Exactly," Kemridge said. "We'll let you know when we've gotten somewhere."

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"Fine," said Plorvash.

After he had left, Marner squeezed a couple of drops of the depilatory out onto the palm of his hand. It stung and he immediately shook it off.

"Better not fool with that till we've run an analysis," Kemridge suggested. "If it's potent enough to remove Domerangi beards, it'll probably be a good skin-dissolver for Earthmen. Those babies have tough hides."

Marner rubbed his hand clean hastily. "What do you think of the deal in general?"

"Pretty soft," Kemridge said. "It shouldn't take more than a week to knock off both these things, barring complications. Seems to me they could pick tougher projects than these."

"Wait till the final one," warned Marner. "These are just warm-ups."

FOUR DAYS later, Marner called Plorvash from the lab.

The alien's bulky form filled the screen. "Hello," he said mildly. "What's new?"

"We've finished the job," Marner reported.

"Both of them?"

"Naturally."

"I'll be right over."

Plorvash strode into the lab about fifteen minutes later, and the two Earthmen, who were busy with the animal-cages at the back of the lab, waved in greeting.

"Stay where you are," Kemridge called loudly. He reached up, pressed a switch, and thirty cages clanged open at once.

As a horde of Domerangi vermin came bounding, slithering, crawling and rolling across the floor toward Plorvash, the alien leaped back in dismay. "What kind of trick is this?"

"Don't worry," Marner said, from the remotest corner of the lab. "It'll all be over in a second."

The animals ignored Plorvash and, to his surprise, they made a bee-line for a complex, humming arrangement of gears and levers behind the door. As they approached, it began flashing a series of colors, emanating strange odors and making curious clicking noises. When the horde drew closer, jointed arms suddenly sprang out and scooped them wholesale into a hopper that gaped open at floor level. Within a moment, they were all stowed away inside.

Marner came across the lab, followed by Kemridge. "We've improved on your model," he said. "We've built a better trap. Your version can deal with only one species at a time."

Plorvash gulped resoundingly. "Very nice. Quite remarkable, in fact."

"We have the schematics in our room," said Kemridge. "The trap

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may have some commercial value on Domerang."

"Probably," Plorvash admitted. "How'd you do on the depilator?"

"That was easy," Marner said. "With the setup you gave us, chemical analysis was a snap. Only I'm afraid we've improved on the original model there, too."

"What do you mean?"

Marner rubbed the side of his face uneasily. "I tried our stuff on myself, couple of days ago, and my face is still smooth as a baby's. The effect seems to be permanent."

"You'll submit samples, of course," Plorvash said. "But I think it's fairly safe to assume that you've passed through the first two projects — ah — reasonably well. Curiously, your counterparts on Earth also did well on their preliminaries, according to our Consul in New York."

"Glad to hear it," Marner lied. "But the third problem tells the tale, doesn't it?"

"Exactly," said Plorvash. "Let's have that one now, shall we?"

A FEW minutes later, Marner and Kemridge found themselves staring down at a complicated nest of glittering relays and tubes which seemed to power an arrangement of pistons and rods. Plorvash had carried it in with the utmost delicacy and had placed it on a workbench in the middle of the vast laboratory.

"What is it?" Marner asked.

"You'll see," promised the alien. He fumbled in the back of the machine, drew forth a cord and plugged it into a wall socket. A small tube in the heart of the machine glowed cherry red and the pistons began to move, first slowly, then more rapidly. After a while, it was humming away at an even, steady clip, pistons barreling back and forth in purposeless but inexorable motion.

Kemridge bent and peered as close to the workings of the gadget as he dared. "It's an engine. What of it?"

"It's a very special kind of engine," Plorvash said. "Suppose you take the plug out."

The Earthman worked the plug from its socket and looked at the machine. Then the plug dropped from his limp hand and skittered to the floor.

"It — doesn't stop going, does it?" Kemridge asked quietly. "The pistons keep on moving."

"This is our power source," Plorvash said smugly. "We use them in vehicles and other such things. It's the third problem."

"We'll give it a try," Marner tried to say casually.

"I'll be most interested in the results," Plorvash said. "And now I must bid you a good day."

"Sure," Marner said weakly. "Cheers."

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They watched the broad-beamed alien waddle gravely out of the laboratory, waited till the door was closed, and glanced at the machine.

It was still moving.

Marner licked his lips and looked pleadingly at Kemridge. "Dave, can we build a perpetual-motion machine?"

THE Domerangi machine worked just as well plugged in or unplugged, once it had tapped some power source to begin with. The pistons threaded ceaselessly up and down. The basic components of the thing seemed simple enough.

"The first step to take," Marner said, "is to shut the damned thing off so we can get a look at its innards."

"How do we do that?"

"By reversing the power source, I suppose. Feed a negative pulse through that power input and that ought to do it. We'll have to reverse the polarity of the signal."

Half an hour's hard work with tools and solder had done that. They plugged the scrambled cord into the socket and the machine coughed twice and subsided.

"Okay," Marner said, rubbing his hands with an enthusiasm he did not feel. "Let's dig this baby apart and find out what makes it tick." He turned and stared meaningfully at Kemridge. "And let's adopt this as a working credo, Dave: inasmuch as the Domerangi have already built this thing, it's *not* impossible. Okay?"

"That seems to be the only basis we can approach it on," Kemridge agreed.

They huddled around the device, staring at the workings. Marner reached down and pointed at a part. "This thing is something like a tuned-plate feedback oscillator," he observed. "And I'll bet we've almost got a thyratron tube over here. Their technology's a good approximation of ours. In fact, the whole thing's within our grasp, technically."

"Hmm. And the result is a closed regenerative system with positive feedback," Kemridge said dizzily. "Infinite energy, going round and round the cycle. If you draw off a hundred watts or so — well, infinity minus a hundred is still infinity!"

"True enough." Marner wiped a gleaming bead of perspiration from his forehead. "Dave, we're going to have to puzzle this thing out from scratch. And we don't dare fail."

He reached doggedly for a screwdriver. "Remember our motto. We'll use our natural savvy and a little perspiration, and we ought to do it."

Three weeks later, they had come up with their first trial model — which wobbled along for

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half an hour, then gave up.

And a month after that, they had a machine that didn't give up.

HESITANTLY, they sent for Plorvash.

"There it is," Marner said, pointing to the bizarre thing that stood next to the original model. Both machines were humming blithely, plugs dangling from the sockets.

"It works?" Plorvash whispered, paling.

"It hasn't stopped yet," Marner said. There were heavy rings under his eyes and his usually plump face was drawn, with the skin tight over his cheekbones. It had been two months of almost constant strain and both Earthmen showed it.

"It works, eh?" Plorvash asked. "*How?*"

"A rather complex hyperspace function," Kemridge said. "I don't want to bother explaining it now — you'll find it all in our report — but it was quite a stunt in topology. We couldn't actually duplicate your model, but we achieved the same effect, which fulfills the terms of the agreement."

"All a matter of response to challenge," said Marner. "We didn't think we could do it until we *had* to — so we did."

"I didn't think you could do it either," Plorvash said hoarsely. He walked over and examined the machine closely. "It works, you say? Honestly, now?" His voice was strained.

"Of course," Marner said indignantly.

"We have just one question." Kemridge pointed to a small black rectangular box buried deep in a maze of circuitry in the original model. "That thing down there — it nearly threw us. We couldn't get it open to examine it and so we had to bypass it and substitute a new system for it. What in blazes is it?"

Plorvash wheeled solidly around to face them. "That," he said in a strangled voice, "is the power source. It's a miniature photoelectric amplifier that should keep the model running for — oh, another two weeks or so. Then the jig would have been up."

"How's that?" Marner was startled.

"It's time to explain something to you," the alien said wearily. "*We don't have any perpetual-motion machines.* You've been cruelly hoaxed into inventing one for us. It's dastardly, but we didn't really think you were going to do it. It took some of our best minds to rig up the model we gave you, you know."

Marner drew up a lab stool and sat down limply, white-faced. Kemridge remained standing, his features blank with disbelief.

Marner said, "You mean we

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invented the thing and you didn't — you —"

Plorvash nodded. "I'm just as astonished as you are," he said. He reached for a lab stool himself and sat down. It groaned under his weight.

Kemridge recovered first. "Well," he said after a moment of silence, "now that it's over, we'll take our machine and go back to Earth. This invalidates the contest, of course."

"I'm afraid you can't do that," Plorvash said. "By a statute enacted some seven hundred years ago, any research done in a Domerangi government lab is automatically government property. Which means, of course, that we'll have to confiscate your — ahem — project."

"That's out of the question!" Marner said hotly.

"And, furthermore, we intend to confiscate *you*, too. We'd like you to stay and show us how to build our machines."

"This is cause for war," Kemridge said. "Earth won't let you get away with this — this kidnaping!"

"Possibly not. But in view of the way things have turned out, it's the sanest thing we can do. And I *don't* think Earth will go to war over you."

"We demand to see our Consul," said Marner.

"Very well," Plorvash agreed. "It's within your rights, I suppose."

THE Earth Consul was a white-haired, sturdy gentleman named Culbertson, who arrived on the scene later that day.

"This is very embarrassing for all of us," the Consul said. He ran his hands nervously down his traditional pin-striped trousers, adjusting the crease.

"You can get us out of it, of course," Marner said. "That machine is our property and they have no right to keep us prisoners here to operate it, do they?"

"Not by all human laws. But the fact remains, unfortunately, that according to *their* laws, they have every right to your invention. And by the treaty of 2716, waiving extraterritorial sovereignty, Earthmen on Domerang are subject to Domerangi laws, and vice versa." He spread his hands in a gesture of sympathetic frustration.

"You mean we're stuck here," Marner said bluntly. He shut his eyes, remembering the nightmare that was the Domerangi equivalent of a bar, thinking of the morbid prospect of spending the rest of his life on this unappetizing planet, all because of some insane dare. "Go on, tell us the whole truth."

The Consul put the palms of his hands together delicately. "We

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intend to make every effort to get you off, of course — naturally so, since we owe a very great debt to you two. You realize that you've upheld Earth's pride."

"Lot of good it did us," Marner grunted.

"Nevertheless, we feel anxious to make amends for the whole unhappy incident. I can assure you that we'll do everything in our power to make your stay here as pleasant and as restful as —"

"Listen, Culbertson," Kemridge said grimly. "We don't want a vacation here, not even with dancing girls twenty-four hours a day and soft violins in the background. We don't like it here. We want to go home. You people got us into this — now get us out."

The Consul grew even more unhappy-looking. "I wish you wouldn't put it that way. We'll do all we can." He paused for a moment, deep in thought, and said, "There's one factor in the case that we haven't as yet explored."

"What's that?" Marner asked uneasily.

"Remember the two Domerangi engineers who went to Earth on the other leg of this hookup?" The Consul glanced around the lab. "Is this place wired anywhere?"

"We checked," Kemridge said, "and you can speak freely. What do they have to do with us?"

CULBERTSON lowered his voice.

"There's a slim chance for you. I've been in touch with authorities on Earth and they've been keeping me informed of the progress of the two Domerangi. You know they got through their first two projects as easily as you did."

The two Earthmen nodded impatiently.

The old diplomat smiled his apologies. "I hate to admit this, but it seems the people at the Earth end of this deal had much the same idea the Domerangi did."

"Perpetual motion, you mean?"

"Not quite," Culbertson said. "They rigged up a phony anti-gravity machine and told the Domerangi to duplicate it, just as was done here. Our psychologies must be similar."

"And what happened?" Marner asked.

"Nothing, yet," the Consul said sadly. "But they're still working on it, I'm told. If they're as clever as they say they are, they ought to hit it sooner or later. You'll just have to be patient and sweat it out. We'll see to it that you're well taken care of in the meantime, of course, and—"

"I don't get it. What does that have to do with us?" Marner demanded.

"If they keep at it, they'll invent it eventually."

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Marner scowled. "That may take years. It may take forever. They may *never* discover a workable anti-grav. Then what about us?"

The Consul looked sympathetic and shrugged.

A curious gleam twinkled in Kemridge's eye. He turned to Marner. "Justin, do you know anything about tensor applications and gravitational fields?"

"What are you driving at?" Marner said.

"We've got an ideal lab setup here. And I'm sure those two Domerangi down there wouldn't mind taking the credit for someone else's anti-grav, if they were approached properly. What do you think?"

Marner brightened. "That's right — they must be just as anxious to get home as we are!"

"You mean," said the Consul, "you'd build the machine and let us smuggle it to Earth so we could slip it to the Domerangi and use that as a talking-point for a trade and —"

He stopped, seeing that no one was listening to him, and looked around. Marner and Kemridge were at the far end of the lab, scribbling equations feverishly.

— ROBERT SILVERBERG

FORECAST

Unbelievable as it seems, we've learned recently that there are readers who actually go through only the synopsis and last installment of serials! If you're one of them and are doing that with Alfred Bester's THE STARS MY DESTINATION, you're missing perhaps the most superbly realistic treatment of teleportation in all science fiction—settling for dehydrated recapitulation instead of living, sweating, fighting through scenes quivering with masterful tension . . . and you have not met Gully Foyle. Before you get to next month's installment, read the previous two and you will see the lethal logic behind Foyle's shrewd revenge for being left to die in space: "Millions for nonsense, but not one cent for entropy!"

There will be at least one novelet — THE NATIVE PROBLEM by Robert Sheckley, which shows up the statement that there is plenty of room in space for every misfit as sheer propaganda. For Danton discovers painfully and bewilderedly that there is less room in space for misfits than anywhere else!

And you'll want to accompany Willy Ley as he goes TRACKING DOWN THE "SEA SERPENT," an exciting hunt that spans the centuries and the oceans. Are there such things? Can the reports be believed? Sign aboard this expedition, for that is exactly what it sets out to find!

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(*Continued from page* 4)
real data. If there are any errors herein, they must be blamed on his cigar.

The banana "tree," he said, is actually an herb, the world's largest, since the "trunk" consists of the concentric leaf bases of the big leaves (also the world's largest).

The banana is technically a berry (world's largest? I forgot to ask him) and the tiny black specks inside are degenerated seeds — *which means that every banana plantation on Earth was planted by Man!*

They had to start somewhere, didn't they? Obviously. The edible banana is a dead-end hybrid of various wild and inedible species. (No, that was not what I was feeding Baggy.) When a seedy diploid and a seedy tetraploid are crossed, the edible non-seed triploid is the result.

So we know how it was done and even where and when — in Malaya in early historical times.

As Ley says, however, the man who can trace the 25 or more varieties of edible bananas back to their ancestors may already have been born . . . but he hasn't done the job yet.

How, I wanted to know, can sterile fruit be planted? The answer is that bits of the banana root stalk serve as seed. Each bit keeps growing out until, before long, a large underground mat of roots surrounds the place where the single bit was planted.

The root stalks produce buds, which shoot up as towering plants; each plant produces only a single bunch of bananas and dies. The plant is then cut to the ground, to be replaced by another growing from a different underground bud.

Where, I asked, had I gone wrong in feeding Baggy? Simple — the fruit does not ripen on the tree. That's why wild monkeys don't eat bananas. (Meant to ask how it was discovered that bananas ripen only off the tree; realize answer could not be more than guesswork.)

In retrospect, the whole development of the banana appears too complex to have been all accident, I objected. Ley was still choking, so I may be reporting incorrectly, but I think he mentioned the peach and some others as having equally mysterious (and inedible) ancestors, yet were cultivated by our own ancestors, indicating a rule-of-green-thumb knowledge of genetics.

Now I ought to explain the title of this editorial and thank the inventor. It's the work of an ingenious fan and the entire equation reads: BA + 2NA = BANANA.

Maybe that's the answer. Great truths are always simple.

— H. L. GOLD

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The Stars My Destination

By ALFRED BESTER

Part 2 of a 4-Part Serial

Being passed by while shipwrecked deserved furious vengeance — but seeking it thrust Foyle from the absolute cold of space to the absolute black of Earth's most notorious cave prison!

Illustrated by EMSH

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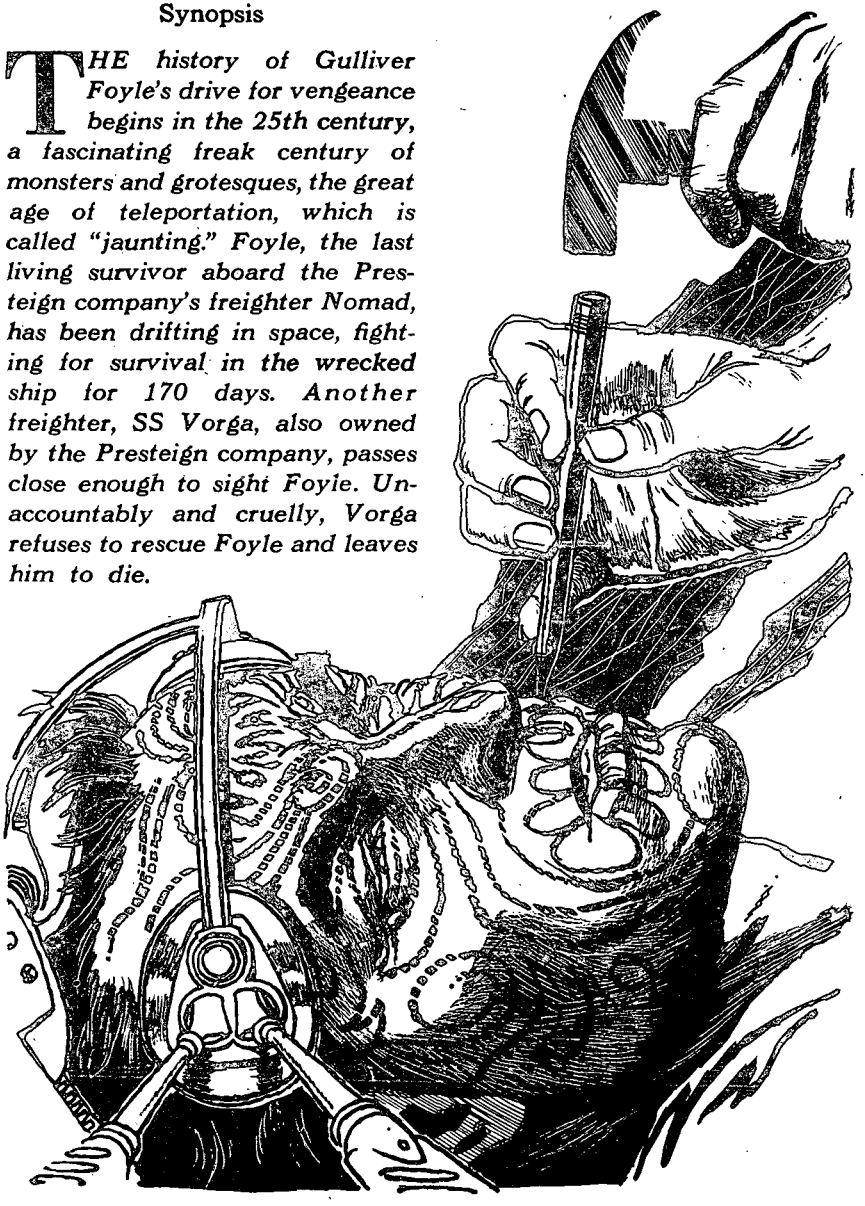
Synopsis

THE history of Gulliver Foyle's drive for vengeance begins in the 25th century, a fascinating freak century of monsters and grotesques, the great age of teleportation, which is called "jaunting." Foyle, the last living survivor aboard the Presteign company's freighter Nomad, has been drifting in space, fighting for survival in the wrecked ship for 170 days. Another freighter, SS Vorga, also owned by the Presteign company, passes close enough to sight Foyle. Unaccountably and cruelly, Vorga refuses to rescue Foyle and leaves him to die.



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Foyle, a common spaceman without training or skill, is abruptly awakened from brute lethargy by his rage and swears to revenge himself on Vorga. He succeeds in getting the wrecked Nomad under way again and is picked up by the savages of a Sargasso asteroid, a tiny planet manufactured of natural rock and wreckage salvaged by its inhabitants in space. They also salvage the SS Nomad and incorporate the wreck into their asteroid.

These are the only savages of the 25th century, descendants of a research team marooned in space centuries ago. They call themselves the Scientific People and go through travesties of scientific ritual, including tattooing of their faces. While Foyle is unconscious, his face is hideously tattooed with designs and the name of the ship on which he was found, Nomad. He awakens to find himself "scientifically" mated to a girl of the Sargasso asteroid.

Foyle escapes and is picked up by the Inner Planets navy and brought back to Earth. He is still seething for revenge and prepares to seek out and destroy Vorga even while he's recuperating from his injuries in an army hospital.

Robin Wednesbury, a beautiful Negro girl who, as a "telesend," a one-way telepath, is teaching the hospital head-injury cases how to jaunte again, discovers that Foyle is malingering. Foyle blackmails her into silence and rapes her. Robin is too terrified by the huge savage man with the tattooed face to defend herself.

Foyle makes a primitive attempt to blow up SS Vorga in the Presteign drydocks in Vancouver and is captured by the Presteign company guards. The head of the giant corporation, Presteign of Presteign, hires the formidable Saul Dagenham of Dagenham Couriers, and Regis Sheffield, leading lawyer of Terra, to rip information out of Foyle. It is urgent to discover the whereabouts of the wreck of SS Nomad, for aboard is Cr 20 millions in bar platinum and a mysterious substance called PyrE, the secret of which only Presteign knows.

The Inner Planets and the Outer Satellites are at war, and Captain Peter Y'ang-Yeovil of Central Intelligence demands that Presteign turn Foyle over to Intelligence so that the army can salvage Nomad and the PyrE. Although Central Intelligence does not know what PyrE is, Y'ang-Yeovil suspects that it has such fantastic powers that it can make the difference between winning and losing the war. Presteign refuses to give up Foyle or any information about PyrE.

Saul Dagenham applies every ingenious form of physical and

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psychological pressure on Foyle to obtain information about the whereabouts of the wreck of the Nomad. Foyle, still possessed by his passionate desire for vengeance against Vorga, refuses to reveal anything. At last Dagenham tells Foyle that legal charges have been fabricated against him. He'll go to one of the cavern-prisons on Terra and stay there until he's willing to talk.

5

SOUTH of Saint-Girons, near the Spanish-French border, is the deepest abyss in France, the Gouffre Martel. Its caverns twist for miles under the Pyrenees. It is the most formidable cavern hospital on Earth. No patient has jaunted out of its pitch darkness, for none has ever succeeded in learning the jaunte coordinates of the black hospital depths.

Short of prefrontal lobotomy, there are only three ways to stop a man from jaunting: a blow on the head, producing concussion; sedation which prevents concentration; and concealment of jaunte coordination. Of the three, concealment was the most practical.

The cells that line the winding passages of Gouffre Martel are cut out of living rock. They are never illuminated. Neither are the passages. Infra-red lamps flood the darkness, visible only to guards and attendants wearing snooper goggles with specially treated lenses. For the patients, there is only the black silence of Gouffre Martel, broken by the distant rush of underground waters.

For Foyle, there were the silence, the rushing and the hospital routine. At eight o'clock (or it may have been any hour in this timeless abyss), he was awakened by a bell. He arose and received his morning meal, slotted into the cell by pneumatic tube. It had to be eaten at once, for the china-surrogate of cups and plates was timed to dissolve in fifteen minutes. At eight-thirty, the cell door opened and Foyle and hundreds of others shuffled blindly through the twisting corridors to Sanitation.

Here, still in darkness, they were processed like beef in a slaughter house—cleansed, shaved, irradiated, disinfected, dosed and inoculated. Their paper uniforms were removed and sent up to the shops to be pulped. New uniforms were issued. Then they shuffled back to their cells, which had been automatically scrubbed out while they were in Sanitation.

In his cell, Foyle listened to interminable therapeutic talks, lectures, moral and ethical guidance for the rest of the morning. Then there was silence again, and noth-

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ing but the rush of distant water and the quiet steps of goggled guards in the corridors.

IN THE afternoon came occupational therapy. The TV screen in each cell lit up and the patient thrust his hands into the shadow frame of the screen. He saw three-dimensionally and he felt the broadcast objects and tools. He cut hospital uniforms, sewed them, manufactured kitchen utensils and prepared foods. Although actually he touched nothing, his motions were transmitted to the shops, where the work was accomplished by remote control. After one short hour of this relief came the darkness and silence again.

But every so often, once or twice a week (or perhaps once or twice a year), came the muffled thud of a distant explosion. The concussions were startling enough to distract Foyle from the furnace of vengeance that he stoked all through the silences. He whispered questions to the invisible figures around him in Sanitation.

"What's them explosions?"

"Explosions?"

"Blowups. Hear 'em a long way off, me."

"Them's Blue Jauntes."

"What?"

"Blue Jauntes. Every sometime a guy gets fed up with old Jeffrey. Can't take it no more, him. Jauntes into the wild blue yonder."

"Jesus."

"Yep. Don't know where they are, them. Don't know where they're going. Blue Jaunte into the dark . . . and we hear 'em exploding in the mountains. Boom! Blue Jaunte."

He was appalled, but he could understand. The darkness, the silence, the monotony destroyed sense and brought on desperation. The loneliness was intolerable. The patients buried in Gouffre Martel prison hospital looked forward eagerly to the morning Sanitation period for a chance to whisper a word and hear a word. But these fragments were not enough and desperation came. Then there would be another distant explosion.

Sometimes the suffering men would turn on each other and a savage fight would break out in Sanitation. These were instantly broken up by the goggled guards, and the morning lecture would switch on the Moral Fiber record preaching the Virtue of Patience.

Foyle learned the records by heart, every word, every click and crack in the tapes. He learned to loathe the voices of the lecturers: the Understanding Baritone, the Cheerful Tenor, the Man-to-Man Bass. He learned to deafen himself to the therapeutic monotony and perform his occupational

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therapy mechanically, but he was without resources to withstand the endless solitary hours. Fury was not enough.

He lost count of days, of meals, of sermons. He no longer whispered in Sanitation. His mind came adrift and he began to wander. He imagined he was back aboard *Nomad,* reliving his fight for survival. Then he lost even this feeble grasp on illusion and began to sink deeper and deeper into the pit of catatonia — of womb silence, womb darkness and womb sleep.

THERE were fleeting dreams. An angel hummed to him once. Another time she sang quietly. Thrice he heard her speak: "Oh, God!" and "God damn!" and "Oh! . . ." in a heart-rending descending note.

He sank into his abyss, listening to her.

"There is a way out," his angel murmured in his ear sweetly, comforting. Her voice was soft and warm, yet it burned with anger. It was the voice of a furious angel. "There is a way out."

It whispered in his ear from nowhere and suddenly, with the logic of desperation, it came to him that there *was* a way out of Gouffre Martel. He had been a fool not to see it before.

"Yes," he croaked. "There's a way out."

There was a soft gasp, then a soft question: "Who's there?"

"Me, is all," Foyle said. "You know me."

"Where are you?"

"Here. Where I always been, me."

"But there's no one. I'm alone."

"Got to thank you for helping me."

"Hearing voices is bad," the furious angel murmured. "The first step off the deep end. I've got to stop."

"You showed me the way out. Blue Jaunte, is all."

"Blue Jaunte! My God, this *must* be real! You're talking the gutter lingo. You must be *real!* Who are you?"

"Gully Foyle."

"But you're not in my cell. You're not even near. Men are in the north quadrant of Gouffre Martel. Women are in the south. I'm South-900. Where are you?"

"North-111."

"You're a quarter of a mile away. How can we — Of course! It's the Whisper Line. I always thought that was a legend, but it's true. It's working now."

"Here I go, me," Foyle whispered. "Blue Jaunte."

"Foyle, listen to me. Forget the Blue Jaunte. Dont throw this away. It's a miracle."

"What's a miracle?"

"There's an acoustical freak in Gouffre Martel — they happen in

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underground caves—a freak of echoes, passages and whispering galleries. Old-timers call it the Whisper Line. I never believed them. No one ever did, but it's true. We're talking to each other over the Whisper Line. No one can hear us but us. We can talk, Foyle. We can plan. Maybe we can escape."

HER name was Jisbella McQueen. She was hot-tempered, independent, intelligent, and she was serving five years of "cure" in Gouffre Martel for larceny. Jisbella gave Foyle a cheerfully venomous account of her revolt against society.

"You don't know what jaunting's done to women, Gully. It's locked us up, sent us back to the seraglio."

"What's seraglio, Jiz?"

"A harem. A place where women are kept on ice. After a thousand years of civilization, it says here, we're still property. Jaunting's such a danger to our virtue, our value, our mint condition, that we're locked up like gold plate in a safe. There's nothing for us to do . . . nothing respectable. No jobs. No careers. There's no getting out, Gully, unless we bust out and smash all the rules."

"Did you have to?"

"I had to be independent, Gully. I had to live my own life and that's the only way society would let me. So I ran away from home and turned crook." And Jiz went on to describe the lurid details of her revolt: the Temper Racket, the Cataract Racket, the Honeymoon and Obituary Robs, the Badger Jaunte and the Glim Drop.

Foyle told her about *Nomad* and *Vorga*, his hatred and his plans. He did not tell Jisbella about his face or the twenty millions in platinum bullion waiting out in the asteroids.

"What happened to *Nomad?*" Jisbella asked. "Was it the way that man Dagenham said? Was she blasted by an O.S. raider?"

"I don't know, me. Can't remember, Jiz."

"The blast probably wiped out your memory. Shock. And being marooned for six months didn't help. Did you notice anything worth salvaging from *Nomad?*"

"No," Foyle said truthfully.

"Did Dagenham mention anything?"

"No," he lied.

"Then he must have another reason for hounding you into Gouffre Martel. There must be something else he wants from *Nomad.*"

"Yeah, Jiz."

"But you were a fool, trying to blow up *Vorga* like that. You're like a wild beast trying to punish the trap that injured it. Steel

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isn't alive. It doesn't think. You can't punish *Vorga.*"

"Don't know what you mean, Jiz. *Vorga* passed me by."

"You punish the brain, Gully, not the ship. Find out who was aboard *Vorga.* Find out who gave the order to pass you by. Punish him."

"Yeah. How?"

"Learn to think, Gully. The head that could figure out how to get *Nomad* under way and how to put a bomb together ought to be able to figure that out. But no more bombs; brains instead. Locate a member of *Vorga's* crew. He'll tell you who was aboard. Track them down. Find out who gave the order. Then punish him. But it'll take time, Gully — time and money. More than you've got."

"I got a whole life, me."

THEY murmured for hours across the Whisper Line, their voices sounding small, yet close to the ear. There was only one particular spot in each cell where the other could be heard, which was why so much time had passed before they discovered the miracle. But now they made up for lost time. And Jisbella educated Foyle.

"If we ever break out of Gouffre Martel, Gully, it'll have to be together, and I'm not trusting myself to an illiterate partner."

"Who's illiterate?"

"You are," Jisbella answered firmly. "I have to talk gutter a you half the time, me."

"I can read and write."

"And that's about all — which means that outside of brute strength, you'll be useless."

"Talk sense, you," he said angrily.

"I am talking sense, me. What's the use of the strongest chisel in the world if it doesn't have an edge? We've got to sharpen your wits, Gully. Got to educate you, man, is all."

He realized she was right. He would need training not only for the bust-out but for the search for *Vorga* as well. Jisbella was the daughter of an architect and had received an education. This she drilled into Foyle, leavened with the cynical experience of five years in the underworld. Occasionally he rebelled against the hard work and there would be fiercely whispered quarrels, but in the end he would apologize and submit again. And sometimes Jisbella would tire of teaching and then they would ramble on, sharing dreams in the dark.

"I think we're falling in love, Gully."

"I think so, too, Jiz."

"I'm an old hag, Gully. A hundred and five years old. What are you like?"

"Awful."

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"How, awful?"

"My face."

"You make yourself sound romantic. Is it one of those exciting scars that make a man attractive?"

"No. You'll see when we meet, us. That's wrong, isn't it, Jiz? Just plain: 'When we meet.' Period."

"Good boy."

"We will meet some day, won't we, Jiz?"

"Soon, I hope, Gully." Jisbella's faraway voice became crisp and businesslike. "But we've got to stop hoping and get down to work. We have to plan and prepare."

FROM the underworld, Jisbella had inherited a mass of information about Gouffre Martel. No one had ever jaunted out of the cavern hospitals, but for decades the underworld had been collecting and collating information about them. It was from this data that Jisbella had formed her quick recognition of the Whisper Line that joined them. It was on the basis of this information that she began to discuss escape.

"We can pull it off, Gully. Never doubt that for a minute. There must be dozens of loopholes in their security system."

"No one's ever found them before."

"No one's ever worked with a partner before. We'll pool our knowledge and we'll make it."

He no longer shambled to Sanitation and back. He felt the corridor walls, noted doors, memorized their texture, counted, listened, deduced and reported. He made a note of every separate step in the Sanitation pens and reported them to Jiz. The questions he whispered to the men around him in the shower and scrub rooms had purpose. Together, Foyle and Jisbella built up a picture of the routine of Gouffre Martel and its security system.

One morning, on the return from Sanitation, he was stopped as he was about to step back into his cell.

"Stay in line, Foyle."

"This is North-111. I know where to get off by now."

"Keep going."

"But—" He was terrified. "You're moving me?"

"Visitor to see you."

He was marched up to the end of the north corridor where it met the three other main corridors that formed the huge cross of the hospital. In the center of the cross were the administration offices, maintenance workshops, clinics and plants.

Foyle was thrust into a room as dark as his cell. The door was shut behind him. He became

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aware of a faint shimmering outline in the blackness. It was no more than the ghost of an image with a blurred body and a death's head. Two black discs on the skull face were either eye sockets or infra-red goggles.

"Good morning," said Saul Dagenham.

"You?" Foyle exclaimed.

"Me. I've got five minutes—I'm dangerously radioactive, remember? Sit down. Chair behind you."

Foyle felt for the chair and sat down slowly.

"Enjoying yourself?" Dagenham inquired.

"What do you want?"

"THERE'S been a change," Dagenham said dryly. "Last time we talked, your dialogue consisted entirely of 'Go to hell.'"

"Go to hell, Dagenham, if it'll make you feel any better."

"Your repartee's improved; your speech, too. You've changed," Dagenham said. "Changed a damned sight too much and a damned sight too fast. I don't like it. What's happened to you?"

"I've been going to night school."

"You've had ten months in this night school."

"Ten months?" Foyle echoed in amazement. "That long?"

"Ten months without sight and without sound. Ten months in solitary. You ought to be broken."

"Oh, I'm broken, all right."

"You ought to be whining. I was right—you're unusual. At this rate, it's going to take too long. We can't wait. I'd like to make a new offer."

"Make it."

"Ten per cent of *Nomad's* bullion. Two million."

"Two million!" Foyle exclaimed. "Why didn't you offer that in the first place?"

"Because I didn't know your caliber. Is it a deal?"

"Almost. Not yet."

"What else?"

"I get out of Gouffre Martel."

"Naturally."

"And someone else, too."

"It can be arranged." Dagenham's voice sharpened. "Anything more?"

"I get access to Presteign's files."

"Are you insane? It's out of the question."

"His shipping files."

"What for?"

"A list of personnel aboard one of his ships."

"Oh." Dagenham's eagerness revived. "I can arrange that. Anything else?"

"No."

"Then it's a deal." Dagenham was delighted. The deadly radioactive blur arose from its chair. "We'll have you out in six hours. We'll start fixing things for your

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friend at once. It's a pity we wasted this time, but no one can figure you, Foyle."

"Why didn't you send in a telepath to probe the information out of me?"

"A telepath? Be reasonable, Foyle. There aren't a dozen full telepaths in all the Inner Planets. Their time is earmarked for the next ten years. We couldn't persuade one to interrupt his schedule for love or money."

"I apologize, Dagenham. I thought you didn't know your business."

"You very nearly hurt my feelings."

"So now I know you're only lying."

"You're flattering me."

"You could have hired a telepath. For a cut of twenty million, you could have hired one without a bit of trouble."

"The government would never—"

"They don't all work for the government. No, you've got something too hot to let a telepath get near."

SAVAGELY, the blur of light leaped across the room and seized Foyle. "How much do you know, Foyle? What are you covering? Who are you working for?" Dagenham's hands shook. "What a fool I've been! Of course you're unusual. You're no common spaceman. I asked you—who are you working for?"

Foyle tore Dagenham's hands loose. "No one," he said. "No one except myself."

"No one, eh? Including your friend in Gouffre Martel you're so eager to rescue? By God, you almost swindled me, Foyle. Tell Captain Y'ang-Yeovil I congratulate him. He's got a better staff than I thought."

"I never heard of any Y'ang-Yeovil."

"It's no deal. You and your colleague are going to rot here. I'll have you moved to the worst cell in the hospital. I'll sink you to the bottom of Gouffre Martel. I'll— Guard, here! G—"

Foyle grasped Dagenham's throat, dragged him down to the floor and hammered his head on the flagstones. Dagenham squirmed once and then was still.

Foyle ripped the goggles off his face and put them on. Sight returned in soft red and rose lights and shadows. He was in a small reception room with a table and two chairs.

Foyle stripped Dagenham's jacket off and put it on with two quick jerks that split the shoulders. Dagenham's cocked highwayman's hat lay on the table. Foyle clapped it on and pulled the brim down over his face.

On opposite walls were two doors. Foyle opened one a crack.

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It led out to the north corridor. He closed it, leaped across the room and tried the other. It opened onto a jaunte-proof maze. Foyle slipped through the door and entered the maze. Without a guide to lead him through the labyrinth, he was immediately lost. He began to run around the twists and turns and found himself back at the reception room. Dagenham was struggling to his knees.

Foyle turned back into the maze again. He ran. He came to a closed door and thrust it open. It revealed a large workshop illuminated by normal light. Two technicians working at a machine bench looked up in surprise.

Foyle snatched up a sledge hammer, leaped on them like a caveman and felled them. Behind him, he heard Dagenham shouting in the distance. He looked around wildly, dreading the discovery that he was trapped in a cul de sac. The workshop was L-shaped. Foyle tore around the corner, burst through the entrance of another jaunte-proof maze and was lost again.

The Gouffre Martel alarm system began clattering. Foyle battered at the walls of the labyrinth with the sledge, shattered the thin plastic masking and found himself in the infra-red-lit south corridor of the Women's Quadrant.

TWO women guards came up the corridor, running hard. Foyle swung the sledge and dropped them. He was near the head of the corridor. Before him stretched a long perspective of cell doors, each bearing a glowing red number. Overhead, the corridor was lit by glowing red globes. Foyle stood on tiptoe and clubbed the globe above him. He hammered through the socket and smashed the current cable. The entire corridor went dark.

"Evens us up—all in the dark now," Foyle gasped, and tore down the corridor, feeling the wall as he ran and counting cell doors. Jisbella had given him an accurate word picture of the South Quadrant. He was counting his way toward South-900. He blundered into a figure, another guard. Foyle struck at her once with his sledge. She fell. The women patients began shrieking. Foyle lost count, ran on, stopped.

"Jiz!" he bellowed.

He heard her voice. He encountered another guard, disposed of her, ran, located Jisbella's cell.

"Gully, for God's sake . . ." Her voice was muffled.

"Get back, girl. Back." He hammered against the door with his sledge and it burst inward. He staggered in and fell against a figure.

"Jiz?" he panted. "Excuse me.

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Was passing by. Thought I'd drop in."

"Gully, in the name of—"

"Yeah. Hell of a way to meet, eh? Come on. Out, girl. Out!" He dragged her out of the cell. "We can't try a break through the offices. They don't like me back there. Which way to your Sanitation pens?"

"Gully, you're crazy."

"Whole quadrant's dark. I smashed the power cable. We've got half a chance. Go!"

He gave her a powerful thrust and she led him down the passages to the automatic stalls of the women's Sanitation pens. While mechanical hands removed their uniforms, soaped, soaked, sprayed and disinfected them, Foyle felt for the glass pane of the medical observation window. He found it, swung the sledge and smashed it.

"Get in, Jiz."

HE shoved her through the window and followed. They were both stripped, greasy with soap, slashed and bleeding. Foyle slipped and crashed through the blackness, searching for the door through which the medical officers entered.

"Can't find the door, Jiz. Door from the clinic. I — "

"Shh!"

"But — "

A soapy hand found his mouth and clamped over it. She gripped his shoulder so hard that her fingernails pierced his skin. Through the bedlam in the caverns sounded the clatter of steps close at hand. Guards were running blindly through the Sanitation stalls. The infra-red lights had not yet been repaired.

"They may not notice the window," Jisbella hissed. "Be quiet."

They crouched on the floor. Steps trampled through the pens in bewildering succession. Then they were gone.

"All clear now," Jisbella whispered. "But they'll have searchlights any minute. Quick, Gully. Out."

"But the door to the clinic, Jiz. I thought — "

"There is no door. They use spiral stairs and they pull them up. They've thought of this escape, too. We'll have to try the laundry lift. Lord know what good it'll do us. Oh, Gully, you fool! You utter fool!"

They climbed through the observation window back into the pens. They searched through the darkness for the lifts by which soiled uniforms were removed and fresh uniforms issued. They could find nothing. And in the darkness, the automatic hands again soaped, sprayed and disinfected them.

The caterwauling of a siren suddenly echoed through the

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caverns, silencing all other sound. There came a hush as suffocating as the darkness.

"They're using the G-phone to track us, Gully."

"The what?"

"Geophone. It can trace sound through half a mile of solid rock. That's why they've sirened for silence."

"The laundry lift?"

"Can't find it."

"Then come on."

"Where?"

"We're running."

"Where?"

"I don't know, but I'm not getting caught flat-footed. Let's go. The exercise'll do you good."

AGAIN he thrust Jisbella before him and they ran, gasping and stumbling, through the blackness, down into the deepest reaches of South Quadrant. Jisbella fell twice, blundering against turns in the passages. Foyle took the lead, holding the sledge in his hand, the handle extended before him as an antenna. But they crashed into a blank wall and realized they had reached the dead end of the corridor. They were boxed, trapped.

"What now?" she wheezed.

"Don't know. Looks like the dead end of my ideas, too. We can't go back for sure. I clobbered Dagenham in the offices. Hate that man. Looks like a poison label with that radioactivity of his. You got a flash, girl?"

"Oh, Gully . . . Gully . . ." Jisbella sobbed.

"Was counting on you for ideas. 'No more bombs,' you said. Wish I had one now. Could — Wait a minute." He touched the oozing wall against which they were leaning. He felt the checkerboard indentations of mortar seams. "Bulletin from G. Foyle. This isn't a natural cave wall. It's made of brick and stone. Feel."

Jisbella felt the wall. "So?"

"Means this passage don't end here. Goes on. They blocked it off. Out of my way."

He shoved Jisbella up the passage, ground his hands into the floor to grit his soapy palms, and began swinging the sledge against the wall. He swung in steady rhythm, grunting at each blow. The steel sledge hit the wall with the blunt concussion of stones struck under water.

"They're coming," Jiz said. "I hear them."

The blunt blows took on a crumbling, crushing overtone. There was a whisper, then a steady pebble-fall of loose mortar. Foyle struck harder, faster. Suddenly there was a crash and a gush of icy air blew in their faces.

"Through," Foyle muttered.

Ferociously, he attacked the

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edges of the hole pierced through the wall. Bricks, stones and old mortar flew. Foyle stopped and called Jisbella.

"Try it."

He dropped the sledge, seized her and held her up to the chest-high opening. She cried out in pain as she tried to wriggle past the sharp edges. Foyle pressed her relentlessly until she got her shoulders and then her hips through. He let go of her legs and heard her fall on the other side.

FOYLE pulled himself up and tore his way through the jagged breach in the wall. He felt Jisbella's hands trying to break his fall as he crashed down in a mass of loose brick and mortar. They were both through into the icy blackness of the unoccupied caverns of Gouffre Martel . . . miles of unexplored grottoes and caves.

"By God, we'll make it yet," Foyle mumbled.

"I don't know if there's a way out, Gully." Jisbella was shaking with cold. "Maybe this is all blind alley, walled off from the hospital."

"There has to be a way out."

"I don't know if we can find it."

"We've got to find it. Let's go, girl."

They blundered forward in the darkness. Foyle tore the useless goggles from his eyes. They crashed against ledges, corners, low ceilings; they fell down slopes and steep steps. They climbed over a razor-back ridge to a level plain and their feet shot from under them. Both fell heavily to a glassy floor. Foyle felt it and touched it with his tongue.

"Ice," he panted. "Good sign. We're in an ice cavern, Jiz. Underground glacier."

They arose shakily, straddling their legs and worked their way across the ice that had been forming in the Gouffre Martel abyss for millennia. They climbed into a forest of stone saplings that were stalagmites and stalactites thrusting up from the jagged floor and down from the ceilings. The vibrations of every step loosened the huge stalactites, ponderous stone spears that thundered down from overhead.

At the edge of the forest, Foyle stopped, reached out and tugged. There was a clear metallic ring. He took Jisbella's hand and placed the long tapering cone of a stalagmite in it.

"Cane," he grunted. "Use it like a blind man."

He broke off another and they went tapping, feeling, stumbling through the darkness. There was no sound but the gallop of panic . . . their gasping breath and racing hearts, the taps of their

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stone canes, the multitudinous drip of water, the distant rushing of the underground river beneath Gouffre Martel.

"Not that way, girl." Foyle nudged her shoulder. "More to the left."

"Have you the faintest notion where we're headed, Gully?"

"Down, Jiz. Follow any slope that leads down."

"You've got an idea?"

"Yeah. Surprise, surprise! Brains instead of bombs."

"Brains instead of —" Jisbella screamed with hysterical laughter. "You exploded into South Quadrant w-with a sledge hammer and th-that's your idea of b-brains instead of b-b-b —"

SHE shrieked and giggled beyond all control until Foyle grasped her and shook her.

"Shut up, Jiz. If they're tracking us by G-phone, they could hear you from Mars."

"S-sorry, Gully. Sorry. I . . ." She took a breath. "Why down?"

"The river — the one we hear all the time. It must be near. It probably melts off the glacier back there."

"The river?"

"The only sure way out. It must break out of the mountain somewhere. We'll swim."

"Gully, you're insane!"

"What's a matter, you? You can't swim?"

"I can swim, but — "

"Then we've got to try. Got to, Jiz. Come on."

The rush of the river grew louder as their strength began to fail. Jisbella pulled to a halt at last, gasping.

"Gully, I've got to rest."

"Too cold. Keeping moving."

"I can't."

"Keep moving." He felt for her arm.

"Get your hands off me!" she cried furiously.

He released her in amazement. "What's the matter with you? Don't lose your head, Jiz. I'm depending on you."

"For what? I told you we had to plan . . . work out an escape . . . and now you've trapped us into this."

"I was trapped myself. Dagenham was going to change my cell. No more Whisper Line for us. I had to, Jiz . . . and we're out, aren't we?"

"Out where? Lost in Gouffre Martel. Looking for a river to drown in. You're a fool, Gully, and I'm an idiot for letting you trap me into this. Damn you! You pull everything down to your imbecile level and you've pulled me down, too. Run. Fight. Punch. That's all you know. Beat. Break. Blast. Destroy — *Gully!*"

Jisbella screamed. There was a clatter of loose stone in the darkness and her scream faded

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down and away to a heavy splash. Foyle heard the thrash of her body in water.

He leaped forward, shouted, "Jiz!" and staggered over the edge of a precipice.

He fell and struck the water flat with a stunning impact. The icy river enclosed him and he could not tell where the surface was.

HE struggled, suffocated, felt the swift current drag him against the chill slime of rocks, and then was borne bubbling to the surface. He coughed and shouted. He heard Jisbella answer, her voice faint and muffled by the roaring torrent. He swam with the current, trying to overtake her.

He shouted and heard her growing fainter and fainter. The roaring grew louder and abruptly he was shot down the hissing sheet of a waterfall. He plunged to the bottom of a deep pool and struggled once more to the surface. The whirling current entangled him with a cold body bracing itself against a smooth rock wall.

"Jiz!"

"Gully! Thank God!"

They clung together for a moment while the water tore at them.

"Gully . . ." Jisbella coughed. "It goes through here."

"The river?"

"Yes."

He squirmed past her and felt the mouth of an underwater tunnel. The current was sucking them into it.

"Hold on," Foyle wheezed. He explored to the left and the right. The walls of the pool were smooth, without handhold.

"We can't climb out. Have to go through."

"There's no air, Gully. No surface."

"Couldn't be forever. We'll hold our breath."

"It could be longer than we can hold our breath."

"Have to gamble."

"I can't do it."

"You must. No other way. Pump your lungs. Hold on to me."

They supported each other in the water, gasping for breath, filling their lungs.

Foyle nudged Jisbella toward the underwater tunnel. "You go first. I'll be right behind . . . help you in case you get into any trouble."

"Trouble!" Jisbella cried in a shaking voice. She submerged and permitted the current to pull her into the tunnel mouth. Foyle followed. The fierce waters drew them down, down, down, caroming from side to side of a tunnel that had been worn glass-smooth. Foyle swam close behind Jisbella,

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feeling her thrashing legs beat his head and shoulders.

They tumbled through the tunnel until their lungs burst and their blind eyes started. Then there was a roaring again and a surface, and they could breathe. The glassy tunnel sides were replaced by jagged rocks. Foyle caught Jisbella's leg and seized a stone projection at the side of the river.

"Got to climb out here!" he shouted.

"What?"

"Got to climb out. You hear that roaring up ahead? Rapids. Be torn to pieces. Out, Jiz."

SHE was too weak to climb out of the water. He thrust her body up onto the rocks and followed. They lay on the dripping stones, too exhausted to speak. At last Foyle got wearily to his feet.

"Have to keep on," he said. "Follow the river. Ready?"

She could not answer; she could not protest. He pulled her up and they went stumbling through the darkness, trying to follow the bank of the torrent. The boulders they traversed were gigantic, standing like dolmens, heaped, jumbled, scattered into a labyrinth. They lurched and twisted through them and lost the river. They could hear it in the darkness; they could not get back to it. They could get nowhere.

Foyle grunted in disgust. "We're lost again. Really lost this time. What are we going to do?"

Jisbella began to cry. She made helpless yet furious sounds. Foyle dragged to a stop and sat down, drawing her down with him.

"Maybe you're right, girl," he said wearily. "Maybe I am a damned fool. I got us trapped into this no-jaunte jam and we're licked."

She didn't answer.

"So much for brainwork. Hell of an education you gave me." He hesitated. "You think we ought to try back-tracking to the hospital?"

"We'll never make it."

"Guess not. Was just practicing my brain. Should we make a racket so they can track us by G-phone?"

"They'd never hear us . . . never find us in time."

"We could make enough noise. You could knock me around a little. Be a pleasure for both of us."

"Shut up."

"What a mess!" He sagged back, cushioning his head on a tuft of soft grass. "At least I had a chance aboard *Nomad*. There was food and I could see where I was trying to go. I could—" He

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broke off and sat bolt upright. "Jiz!"

"Don't talk so much."

HE FELT the ground under him and clawed up sod and tufts of grass. He thrust them into her face.

"Smell this!" He laughed. "Taste it. It's grass, Jiz. Earth and grass. We must be out of Gouffre Martel."

"What?"

"It's night outside. Overcast. We came out of the caves and never knew it. We're out, Jiz!"

They leaped to their feet, peering, listening, sniffing. The night was impenetrable, but they heard the soft sigh of night winds, and the sweet scent of green growing things came to their nostrils. Far in the distance, a dog barked.

"Good Lord, Gully," Jisbella whispered incredulously. "You're right. We're out of Gouffre Martel. All we have to do is wait for dawn."

She laughed. She flung her arms about him and kissed him. They babbled excitedly. They sank down on the soft grass again, weary, but unable to rest, eager, impatient, all life before them.

"Hello, Gully, darling Gully. Hello, Gully, after all this time."

"Hello, Jiz."

"I told you we'd meet some day . . . some day soon. I told you, darling. And this is the day."

"The night."

"The night, so it is. But no more murmuring in the night along the Whisper Line. No more night for us, Gully dear."

Suddenly they became aware that they were nude, lying close, no longer separated. Jisbella fell silent, but did not move. He clasped her almost angrily with a desire that was no less than hers.

When dawn came, he saw that she was lovely, long and lean, with smoky red hair and a generous mouth.

But when dawn came, she saw his face.

6

HARLEY BAKER, M.D., had a small general practice in Montana-Oregon which was legitimate and barely paid for the diesel oil he consumed each weekend, participating in the rallies for vintage tractors, which were the vogue in Sahara. His real income was earned in his Freak Factory in Trenton, to which Baker jaunted every Monday, Wednesday and Friday night. There, for enormous fees and no questions asked, Baker created monstrosities for the entertainment business and refashioned skin, muscle and bone for the underworld.

Looking like a male midwife,

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Baker sat on the cool veranda of his Spokane mansion, listening to Jiz McQueen finish the story of her escape.

"Once we hit the open country outside Gouffre Martel, it was easy. We found a shooting lodge, broke in and got some clothes. There were guns there, too—lovely old steel things for killing with explosives. We took them and sold them to some locals. Then we bought rides to the nearest jaunte stage we had memorized."

"Which?"

"Biarritz."

"Traveled by night, eh?"

"Naturally."

"Do anything about Foyle's face?"

"We tried makeup, but that didn't work. The damned tattooing showed through. Then I bought a dark skin-surrogate and sprayed it on."

"Did that do it?"

"No," Jiz said angrily. "You have to keep your face quiet or else the surrogate cracks and peels. Foyle couldn't control himself. He never can. It was plain hell."

"Where is he now?"

"Sam Quatt's got him in tow."

"I thought Sam retired from the rackets."

"He did," Jisbella said grimly, "but he owes me a favor. He's minding Foyle. They're circulating on the jaunte to stay ahead of the cops."

"INTERESTING," Baker said musingly. "Haven't seen a tattoo case in all my life. Thought it was a dead art. I'd like to add him to my collection. Do you know I collect curios, Jiz?"

"Everybody knows that zoo of yours in Trenton, Baker. It's ghastly."

"I picked up a genuine fraternal cyst last month—" Baker began enthusiastically.

"I don't want to hear about it," she snapped. "And I don't want Foyle in your zoo. Can you get the muck off his face? Clean it up? He says they were stymied at General Hospital."

"They haven't had my experience, dear. Hmm. I seem to remember reading something once somewhere. Now where did I—? Wait a minute."

Baker stood up and disappeared with a faint *pop*. Jisbella paced the veranda fiercely until he reappeared twenty minutes later with a tattered book in his hands and a triumphant expression on his face.

"Got it," Baker said. "Saw it in the Caltech Library stacks three years ago. You may admire my memory."

"To hell with your memory. What about his face?"

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Baker flipped the fragile pages and meditated. "Indigotin disulphonic acid. I may have to synthesize the acid, but . . ." He closed the text and nodded emphatically. "I can do it. Only it seems a pity to tamper with that face if it's as unique as you describe it."

"Will you get off your disgusting hobby?" Jisbella exclaimed in exasperation. "We're hot, understand? The first that ever broke out of Gouffre Martel. The cops won't rest until they've got us back. This is extra-special for them."

"But —"

"How long do you think we can stay out of Gouffre Martel with Foyle running around with that tattooed face?"

"What are you so angry about?"

"I'm not angry. I'm explaining.

"He'd be happy in the zoo," Baker said persuasively. "And he'd be under cover there. I'd put him in the room next to the Cyclops girl —"

"The zoo is out. That's definite."

"All right, Jiz. But why are you worried about Foyle being recaptured? It won't have anything to do with you."

"Why should you worry about me worrying? I'm asking you to do a job. I'm paying for it."

"It'll be expensive, dear, and I'm fond of you. I'm trying to save you money."

"No, you're not."

"Then I'm curious."

"Then let's say I'm grateful. He helped me; now I'm helping him."

He smiled cynically. "Then let's help him with a brand-new face."

"No," she said in a flat, decisive voice.

"I thought so. You want his face cleaned up because you're interested in his face."

"Damn you, Baker, will you do the job or not?"

"It'll cost five thousand."

"Break that down."

"A thousand to synthesize the acid. Three thousand for the surgery. And one thousand for —"

"Your curiosity?"

"No, dear." Baker smiled again. "A thousand for the anesthetist."

"Why anesthesia?"

He reopened the ancient text. "It looks like a painful operation. You know how tattooing is done? They take a needle, dip it in dye, and punch it into the skin. To bleach that dye out, I'll have to go over his face with a needle, pore by pore, and punch in the indigotin disulphonic. It'll hurt."

Jisbella's eyes flashed. "Can you do it without the dope?"

"I can, Jiz, but Foyle —"

"Forget Foyle! I'm paying four thousand. Let him suffer."

"Jiz! You don't know what you're letting him in for!"

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"I know. Let him suffer." She laughed so furiously that she startled Baker. "Let his face make him suffer, too."

BAKER'S Freak Factory occupied a round brick three-story building that had once been the roundhouse in a suburban railway yard before jaunting ended the need for suburban railroads.

The ancient ivy-covered roundhouse was alongside the Trenton rocket pits, and the rear windows looked out on the mouths of the pits thrusting their anti-grav beams upward, and Baker's patients could amuse themselves watching the spaceships riding silently up and down the beams, their portholes blazing, recognition signals blinking, their hulls rippling with St. Elmo's fire as the atmosphere carried off the electrostatic charges built up in outer space.

The basement floor of the factory contained Baker's zoo of anatomical curiosities, natural freaks and monsters bought and/or abducted. Baker, like the rest of his world, was passionately devoted to these creatures and spent long hours with them, drinking in the spectacle of their distortions the way other men saturated themselves in the past with the beauty of art.

The middle floor of the roundhouse contained bedrooms for post-operative patients, laboratories, staff rooms, and kitchens.

The top floor contained the operating theaters.

In one of the latter, a small room usually used for retinal experiments, Baker was at work on Foyle's face. Under a harsh battery of lamps, he bent over the operating table, working meticulously with a small steel hammer and a platinum needle. Baker was following the pattern of the old tattooing on Foyle's face, searching out each minute scar in the skin and driving the needle into it.

Foyle's head was gripped in a clamp, but his body was unstrapped. His muscles writhed at each tap of the hammer, but he never moved his body. He gripped the sides of the operating table.

"Control," he said through his teeth. "You wanted me to learn control, Jiz. I'm practicing." He winced.

"Don't move," Baker ordered.

"I'm playing it for laughs."

"You're doing all right, son," Sam Quatt said, looking sick. He glanced sidelong at Jisbella's ferocious face. "What do you say, Jiz?"

"He's learning."

Baker continued dipping and hammering the needle.

"Listen, Sam," Foyle mumbled, barely audible. "Jiz told me you

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own a private ship. Crime pays, huh?"

"Yeah, crime pays. I got a little four-man job. Twin-jet. Kind they call a Saturn Weekender."

"Why Saturn Weekender?"

"Because a weekend on Saturn would last ninety days. She can carry food and fuel for three months."

"Just right for me," Foyle muttered.

HE WRITHED and controlled himself. "Sam, I want to rent your ship."

"What for?"

"Something hot."

"Legitimate?"

"No."

"Then it's not for me, son. I've lost my nerve. Jaunting the circuit with you, one step ahead of the cops, showed me that. I've retired for keeps. All I want is peace."

"I'll pay fifty thousand. Don't you want fifty thousand? You could spend Sundays counting it."

The needle was hammering remorselessly. Foyle's body was twitching at each impact.

"I already got fifty thousand. I got ten times that in cash in a bank in Vienna." Quatt reached into his pocket and took out a ring of glittering sonic keys. "Here's the key for the bank. This is the key to my place in Joburg. Twenty rooms, twenty acres. This here's the key to my Weekender in Montauk. You ain't temptin' me, son. I quit while I was ahead. I'm jaunting back to Joburg and live happy for the rest of my life."

"Let me have the Weekender. You can sit safe in Joburg and collect."

"Collect when?"

"When I get back."

"You want my ship on trust and a promise to pay?"

"A guarantee."

Quatt snorted. "What guarantee?"

"It's a salvage job in the asteroids. Ship named *Nomad*."

"What's on the *Nomad?* What makes the salvage pay off?"

"I don't know."

"You're lying."

"I don't know," Foyle insisted stubbornly. "But there has to be something valuable. Ask Jiz."

"Listen," Quatt said, "I'm going to teach you something. We do business legitimate, see? We don't slash and scalp. We don't hold out. I know what's on your mind. You got something juicy, but you don't want to cut anybody else in on it. That's why you're begging for favors."

FOYLE writhed under the needle, but, still gripped in the vice of his possession, was forced to repeat: "I don't know, Sam. Ask Jiz."

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"If you've got an honest deal, make an honest proposition," Quatt said angrily. "Don't come prowling around like a damned tattooed tiger figuring how to pounce. We're the only friends you got. Don't try to slash and scalp —"

Quatt was interrupted by a cry torn from Foyle's lips.

"Hold still," Baker said in an abstracted voice. "When you twitch your face, I can't control the needle." He looked hard and long at Jisbella.

Her lips trembled. Suddenly she opened her purse and took out two Cr 500 banknotes. She dropped them alongside the beaker of acid.

"We'll wait outside," she said.

She fainted in the hall. Quatt dragged her to a chair and found a nurse, who revived her with aromatic ammonia. She began to cry so violently that Quatt was frightened. He dismissed the nurse and hovered until the sobbing subsided.

"What the hell has been going on?" he demanded. "What was that money supposed to mean?"

"It was blood money."

"For what?"

"I don't want to talk about it."

"Are you all right?"

"No."

"Anything I can do?"

"No."

There was a long pause. Then Jisbella asked in a weary voice: "Are you going to make that deal with Gully?"

"Me? Not a chance. It sounds like a thousand-to-one shot."

"There has to be something valuable on the *Nomad*. Otherwise Dagenham wouldn't have hounded Gully."

"I'm still not interested. What about you?"

"Not interested, either. I don't want any part of Gully Foyle again."

After another pause, Quatt asked: "Can I go home now?"

"You've had a rough time, haven't you, Sam?"

"I think I died about a thousand times nurse-maidin' that tiger around the circuit."

"I'm sorry, Sam."

"I had it coming to me, after what I did to you when you were copped in Memphis."

"Running out on me was only natural, Sam."

QUATT shrugged. "We always do what's natural, only sometimes we shouldn't do it."

"I know, Sam. I know."

"And you spend the rest of your life trying to make up for it. I figure I'm lucky, Jiz. I was able to square it tonight. Can I go home now?"

"Back to Joburg and the happy life?"

"Uh-huh."

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"Don't leave me alone yet, Sam. I'm ashamed of myself."

"What for?"

"Cruelty to dumb animals."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Never mind. Hang around a little. Tell me about the happy life. What's so happy about it?"

"Well," Quatt said reflectively, "it's having everything you wanted when you were a kid. If you can have everything at fifty that you wanted when you were fifteen, you're happy. Now when I was fifteen . . ." And Quatt went on and on describing the symbols, ambitions and frustrations of his boyhood which he was now satisfying, until Baker came out of the operating theater.

"Finished?" Jisbella asked eagerly.

"Finished. After I put him under, I was able to work faster. They're bandaging his face now. He'll be out in a few minutes."

"Weak?"

"Naturally."

"How long before the bandages come off?"

"Six or seven days."

"His face'll be clean?"

"I thought you weren't interested in his face, Jiz. It *ought* to be clean. I don't think I missed a spot of pigment. You may admire my skill, Jisbella — also my sagacity. I'm going to back Foyle's salvage trip."

Quatt laughed. "You taking a thousand-to-one gamble, Baker? I thought you were smart."

"I am. He's in shock and he talked under the anesthesia. There's twenty million in platinum bullion aboard the *Nomad*."

"Twenty million!" Sam Quatt's face darkened and he turned on Jisbella.

But she was also furious. "Don't look at me, Sam. I didn't know. He held out on me, too. Swore he never knew why Dagenham was hounding him."

"It was Dagenham who told him," Baker said. "That was another thing he let slip."

"I'll kill him," Jisbella snapped. "I'll tear him apart with my own two hands and you won't find anything inside his carcass but black rot. He'll be a curio for your zoo, Baker. I wish to God I'd let you have him!"

THE door of the operating theater opened and two orderlies wheeled out a trolley on which Foyle lay, twitching slightly. His entire head was one white globe of bandage.

"Is he conscious?" Quatt asked Baker.

"I'll handle this," Jisbella burst out. "I'll talk to the son of a— Foyle!"

Foyle answered faintly through the mask of bandage. As Jisbella drew a savage breath for her on-

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slaught, one wall of the hospital disappeared and there was a clap of thunder that knocked them to their feet. The entire building rocked from repeated explosions, and through the gaps in the walls, uniformed men began jaunting in from the streets outside, like rooks swooping into the gut of a battlefield.

"Raid!" Baker shouted.

"Christ!" Quatt shook.

The uniformed men were swarming all over the building, shouting: "Foyle! Foyle!"

Baker disappeared with a *pop*. The attendants jaunted, too, deserting the trolley on which Foyle waved his arms and legs feebly, making faint sounds.

"It's a goddam raid!" Quatt shook Jisbella. "Go, girl! Go!"

"We can't leave Foyle!"

"Wake up, girl! Go!"

"No."

Jisbella seized the trolley and ran it down the corridor. Quatt pounded alongside her. The roaring in the hospital grew louder: "Foyle! Foyle! Foyle!"

"Leave him!" Quatt urged. "Let them have him."

"No."

"It's a lobo for us, girl, if they get us."

"We can't run out on him."

They skidded around a corner into a shrieking mob of post-operative patients, bird men with fluttering wings, mermaids dragging themselves along the floor like seals, hermaphrodites, giants, pygmies, two-headed twins, centaurs, and a mewling sphinx. They clawed at Jisbella and Quatt in terror.

"Get him off the trolley!" Jisbella cried.

Quatt yanked Foyle off the trolley. Foyle came to his feet and sagged. Jisbella took his arm and, between them, Sam and Jiz hauled him through a door into a ward filled with Baker's temporal freaks — subjects with accelerated time-sense, darting about the ward with the lightning rapidity of humming birds and emitting piercing batlike squeals.

"Jaunte him out, Sam."

"After the way he tried to cross and scalp us?"

"We can't ditch him, Sam. You ought to know that by now. Jaunte him out. Caister's place!"

SHE helped Quatt haul Foyle to his shoulder. The temporal freaks seemed to fill the ward with shrieking streaks. The ward doors burst open. A dozen bolts from pneumatic guns whined through the ward, dropping the temporal patients in their gyrations. Quatt was slammed back against a wall, dropping Foyle. A black and blue bruise appeared on his temple.

"Get out of here!" Quatt roared. "I'm done, Jiz!"

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"Sam!" she cried in panic.

"I'm done. Can't jaunte. Go, girl!"

Trying to shake off the concussion that prevented him from jaunting, Quatt straightened and charged forward, meeting the uniformed men who poured into the ward. Jisbella took Foyle's arm and dragged him out the back of the ward, through a pantry, a clinic, a laundry supply, and down flights of ancient stairs that buckled and threw up clouds of termite dust.

They came into a victual cellar. Baker's zoo inmates had broken out of their cells in the chaos and were raiding the cellar like bees glutting themselves with honey in an attacked hive. A Cyclops girl was cramming her mouth with handfuls of butter scooped from a tub. Her single eye above the bridge of her nose leered at them.

Jisbella dragged Foyle through the victual cellar, found a bolted wooden door and kicked it open. They stumbled down a flight of crumbling steps and found themselves in what had once been a coal cellar. The concussions and roarings overhead sounded deeper and hollow. A chute slot on one side of the cellar was barred with an iron door held by iron clamps. Jisbella placed Foyle's hands on the clamps. Together they opened them and climbed out of the cellar through the coal chute.

They were outside the Freak Factory, huddled against the rear wall. Before them were the Trenton Rocket pits, and as they gasped for breath, Jiz saw a freighter come sliding down an anti-grav beam into a waiting pit. Its portholes blazed and its recognition signals blinked like a lurid neon sign, illuminating the back wall of the hospital.

A figure leaped from the roof of the hospital. It was Sam Quatt, attempting a desperate flight. He sailed out into space, arms and legs flailing, trying to reach the up-thrusting anti-grav beam of the nearest pit which might catch him in mid-flight and cushion his fall.

His aim was perfect. Seventy feet above ground, he dropped squarely into the shaft of the beam.

It was not in operation.

He fell and was smashed on the edge of the pit.

JISBELLA sobbed. Still automatically retaining her grip on Foyle's arm, she ran across the seamed concrete to Sam Quatt's body. There she let go of Foyle and touched Quatt's head tenderly. Her fingers were stained with blood. Foyle tore at the bandage on his face, working eye-holes through the gauze. He muttered to himself, listening to Jisbella

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weep and hearing the shouts behind him from Baker's factory. His hands fumbled at Quatt's body, then arose and tried to pull Jisbella up.

"Got to go," he croaked. "Got to get out. They've seen us."

Jisbella never moved. Foyle mustered all his strength and pulled her upright.

"Times Square," he said. "Jaunte, Jiz!"

Uniformed figures appeared around them. Foyle shook Jisbella's arm and jaunted to Times Square, where masses of jaunters on the gigantic stage stared in amazement at the huge man with the white bandaged globe for a head. The stage was the size of two football fields.

Foyle stared around dimly through the bandages. There was no sign of Jisbella, but she might be anywhere. He lifted his voice to a shout.

"Montauk, Jiz! Montauk! The Folly Stage!"

Foyle jaunted with a last thrust of energy and a prayer. An icy Nor'easter was blowing in from Block Island and sweeping brittle ice crystals across the stage on the site of a medieval ruin known as Fisher's Folly. There was another figure on the stage. Foyle tottered to it through the wind and the snow. It was Jisbella, looking frozen and lost.

"Thank God," Foyle breathed almost reverently. "Thank God. Where does Sam keep his Weekender?" He shook Jisbella's elbow. "Where does Sam keep his Weekender?"

"Sam's dead."

"Where does he keep that Saturn Weekender?"

"He's retired, Sam is. He's not scared any more."

"Where's the ship, Jiz?"

"In the yards down at the lighthouse."

"Come on."

"Where?"

"To Sam's ship!" Foyle thrust his big hand before Jisbella's eyes; a bunch of keys lay in his palm. "I took his keys. Come on."

"He gave them to you?"

"I took them off his body."

"Ghoul!" She began to laugh. "Liar . . . Lecher . . . Tiger . . . Ghoul! The walking cancer . . . Gully Foyle."

Nevertheless she followed him through the snow storm to Montauk Light.

TO THREE acrobats wearing powdered wigs, four flamboyant women carrying pythons, a child with golden curls and a cynical mouth, a professional duelist in medieval armor, and a man wearing a hollow glass leg in which goldfish swam, Saul Dagenham said: "All right, the operation's finished. Call the rest off and tell them to report back to

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Courier headquarters promptly."

The sideshow jaunted and disappeared. Regis Sheffield rubbed his eyes and asked: "What was that lunacy supposed to be, Dagenham?"

"Disturbs your legal mind, eh? That was part of the cast of our FFCC operation — fun, fantasy, confusion and catastrophe." Dagenham turned to Presteign and smiled his death's-head smile. "I'll return your fee if you like, Presteign."

"You're quitting?"

"No, I'm enjoying myself. I'll work for nothing. I've never tangled with a man of Foyle's caliber before. He's unique."

"How?" Sheffield demanded.

"I arranged for him to escape from Gouffre Martel. He escaped, all right — but not my way. I tried to keep him out of police hands with confusion and catastrophe. He ducked the police — but his own way. I tried to keep him out of Central Intelligence's hands with fun and fantasy. He stayed clear — again his own way. I tried to detour him into a ship so he could make his try for *Nomad*. He wouldn't detour — but he got his ship. He's heading out now."

"You're following?"

"Naturally." Dagenham hesitated. "But what was he doing in Baker's factory?"

"Plastic surgery?" Sheffield suggested. "A new face?"

"Not possible. Baker's good, but he can't do a plastic that quick, so it had to be minor surgery. Foyle was on his feet with his head bandaged."

"The tattoo?" Presteign asked.

Dagenham nodded and the smile left his lips. "That's what's worrying me. You realize, Presteign, that if Baker removed the tattooing, we'll never recognize Foyle?"

"My dear Dagenham, his face won't be changed."

"We've never seen his face, only the mask."

"I haven't met the man at all," Sheffield said. "What's the mask like?"

"Like a tiger. I was with Foyle for two long sessions. I ought to know his face by heart, but I don't. All I know is the tattooing."

"Ridiculous," Sheffield stated bluntly.

"No. Foyle has to be seen to be believed. However, it doesn't matter. He'll lead us out to *Nomad*. He'll lead us to your bullion and PyrE, Presteign. I'm almost sorry it's all over. As I said, I've been enjoying myself. He really is unique."

7

THE Saturn Weekender was built like a pleasure yacht; it was ample for four, spacious for two, but not spacious enough for

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Foyle and Jiz McQueen. Foyle slept in the main cabin; Jiz kept to herself in the stateroom.

On the seventh day out, Jisbella spoke to Foyle for the second time: "Let's get those bandages off, Ghoul."

Foyle left the galley, where he was sullenly heating coffee, and kicked back in freefall to the bathroom. He floated in after Jisbella and wedged himself into the alcove before the washbasin mirror. Jisbella braced herself on the basin, opened an ether capsule and began soaking and stripping the bandage off with hard, hating hands. The strips of gauze peeled slowly.

"D'you think Baker did the job?" he asked in agonized suspense.

No answer.

"Could he have missed anywhere?"

The stripping continued.

"It stopped hurting two days ago."

No answer.

"For God's sake, Jiz! Is it still war between us?"

Jisbella's hands stopped. She looked at Foyle's bandaged face with hatred. "What do you think?"

"I asked you."

"The answer is yes."

"Why?"

"You'll never understand."

"Make me understand."

"Shut up."

"If it's war, why'd you come with me?"

"To get what's coming to Sam and me."

"Money?"

"Shut up."

"You didn't have to come along. You could have trusted me."

"Trusted you? *You?*" Jisbella laughed without mirth and recommenced the peeling.

Foyle struck her hands away. "I'll do it myself."

She lashed him across his bandaged face. "You'll do what I tell you. Be still, Ghoul!"

SHE continued unwinding the bandage. A strip came away, revealing Foyle's eyes. They stared at Jisbella, dark and brooding. The eyelids were clean; the bridge of the nose was clean. A strip came away from Foyle's chin. It was blue-black. Foyle, watching intently in the mirror, gasped.

"He missed the chin!" he exclaimed. "Baker goofed—"

"Shut up," Jiz answered shortly. "That's whiskers."

The innermost strips came away quickly, revealing cheeks, mouth and brow. The brow was clean. The cheeks under the eyes were clean. The rest was covered with a blue-black seven-day beard.

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"Shave," Jiz commanded.

Foyle ran water, soaked his face, rubbed in depilatory and washed the beard off. Then he leaned close to the mirror and inspected himself, unaware that Jisbella's head was close to his as she, too, stared into the mirror. Not a mark of tattooing remained. Both sighed.

"It's off," Foyle said. "All off. He did the job." Suddenly he leaned farther forward and inspected himself more closely. His face looked new to him, as new as it looked to Jisbella. "I'm changed. I don't remember looking like this. Did he do surgery on me, too?"

"No," said Jisbella. "What's inside you changed it. That's the ghoul you're seeing, along with the liar and the cheat."

"Lay off! Let me alone!"

"Ghoul," Jisbella repeated, staring at Foyle's face with glowing eyes. "Liar. Cheat."

He took her shoulders and shoved her out into the companionway. She went sailing down into the main lounge, caught a guide-bar and spun herself around.

"Ghoul!" she cried. "Liar! Cheat! Ghoul! Lecher! Beast!"

Foyle pushed off after her, seized her again and shook her violently. Her red hair burst out of the clip that gathered it at the nape of her neck and floated out like a mermaid's tresses. The burning expression on her face transformed Foyle's anger into passion. He enveloped her and buried his new face in her breast.

"Lecher," Jiz murmured. "Animal."

"Jiz . . ."

"The light," Jisbella whispered.

Foyle reached out blindly toward the wall-switches and pressed buttons, and the Saturn Weekender drove on toward the asteroids with darkened portholes.

THEY floated together in the cabin, drowsing, murmuring, touching tenderly for hours.

"Poor Gully," Jisbella whispered. "Poor darling Gully . . ."

"Not poor," he said. "Rich. Soon."

"Yes, rich and empty. You've got nothing inside you, Gully dear. Nothing but hatred and revenge."

"It's enough."

"Enough for now. But later?"

"Later? That depends."

"It depends on your inside, Gully; what you get hold of."

"No. My future depends on what I get rid of."

"Gully, why did you hold out on me in Gouffre Martel? Why didn't you tell me you knew there was a fortune aboard *Nomad?*"

"I couldn't."

"Didn't you trust me?"

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"It wasn't that. I couldn't help myself. That's what's inside me — what I have to get rid of."

"Control again, Gully? You're driven."

"Yes, I'm driven. I can't learn control, Jiz. I want to, but I can't."

"Do you try?"

"I do. God knows, I do. But then something happens and —"

"And then you pounce like a tiger."

"If I could carry you in my pocket, Jiz, to warn me, stick a pin in me . . ."

"Nobody can do it for you, Gully. You have to learn yourself."

He digested that for a long moment. Then he spoke hesitantly: "Jiz, about the money . . ."

"To hell with the money."

"Can I hold you to that?"

"Oh, Gully."

"Not that I — that I'm trying to hold out on you. If it wasn't for *Vorga*, I'd give you all you wanted. All! I'll give you every cent left over when I'm finished. But I'm scared, Jiz. *Vorga* is tough, what with Presteign and Dagenham and that lawyer Sheffield. I've got to hold on to every cent, Jiz. I'm afraid if I let you take one credit, that could make the difference between *Vorga* and I."

"Me."

"Me." He waited. "Well?"

"You're possessed," she said wearily. "Not just a part of you, but all of you."

"No."

"Yes, Gully. All of you. It's just your skin making love to me. The rest is feeding on *Vorga*."

At that moment, the radar alarm in the forward control cabin burst upon them, unwelcome and warning.

"Destination zero," Foyle said, no longer relaxed, once more possessed. He shot forward into the control cabin.

SO HE returned to the freak planetoid in the Asteroid Belt between Mars and Jupiter, the Sargasso planet manufactured of rock and wreckage and the spoils of space-disaster salvaged by the Scientific People. He returned to the home of J♂seph and his People who had tattooed "N♂mad" across his face and scientifically mated him to the girl named M♀ira.

Foyle overran the asteroid with the sudden fury of a Vandal raid. He came blasting out of space, braked with a spume of flame from the forward jets, and kicked the Weekender into a tight spin around the junkheap.

They whirled around, passing the blackened ports, the big hatch from which J♂seph and his Scientific People emerged to collect the drifting debris of space, the

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new crater Foyle had torn out of the side of the asteroid in his first plunge back to Terra. They whipped past the giant patchwork windows of the asteroid greenhouse and saw hundreds of faces peering out at them, tiny white dots mottled with tattooing.

"So I didn't murder them," Foyle grunted. "They've pulled back into the asteroid. Probably living deep inside while they get the rest repaired."

"Will you help them, Gully?"

"Why?"

"You did the damage."

"I've got my own problems. But it's a relief. They won't be bothering us."

He circled the asteroid once more and brought the Weekender down in the mouth of the new crater.

"We'll work from here," he said. "Get into a suit, Jiz. Let's go! Let's go!"

He drove her, mad with impatience; he drove himself. They corked up in their spacesuits, left the Weekender and went sprawling through the debris in the crater into the bleak heart of the asteroid. It was like squirming through the crawling tunnels of giant worm-holes. Foyle switched on his micro-wave suit-set and spoke to Jiz.

"Be easy to get lost in here. Stay with me. Stay close."

"Where are we going, Gully?"

"After *Nomad*. I remember they were cementing her into the asteroid when I left. Don't remember where. Have to find her."

THE passages were airless and their progress was soundless, but the vibrations carried through metal and rock. They paused once for breath alongside the pitted hull of an ancient warship. As they leaned against it, they felt the vibrations of signals from within, a rhythmic knocking.

Foyle smiled grimly. "That's Jaseph and the Scientific People inside, requesting a few words. I'll give 'em an evasive answer." He pounded twice on the hull. "And now a personal message for my wife." His face darkened. He smote the hull angrily and turned away. "Come on. Let's go."

But as they continued the search, the signals followed them. It became apparent that the outer periphery of the asteroid had been abandoned; the tribe had withdrawn to the center. Then, far down a shaft wrought of beaten aluminum, a hatch opened, light blazed forth, and Jaseph appeared in an ancient spacesuit fashioned of glass-cloth. He stood in the clumsy sack, his devil-face staring, his hands clutched in supplication, his devil-mouth making motions.

Foyle stared at the old man, took a step toward him and then

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stopped, fists clenched, throat working as fury arose within him. And Jisbella, looking at Foyle, cried out in horror. The old tattooing had returned to his face, blood-red against the pallor of the skin, scarlet instead of black, truly a tiger mask in color as well as design.

"Gully!" she cried. "Your face!"

Foyle ignored her and stood glaring at Joseph while the old man made beseeching gestures, motioned to them to enter the interior of the asteroid, and then disappeared. Only then did Foyle turn to Jisbella and ask: "What? What did you say?"

Through the clear globe of the helmet, she could see his face distinctly. And as the rage within Foyle died away, Jisbella saw the blood-red tattooing fade and disappear.

"Did you see that joker?" Foyle said. "That was Joseph. Did you see him begging and pleading after what he did to me? . . . What did you say?"

"Your face, Gully. I know what's happened to your face."

"What are you talking about?"

"You wanted something that would control you, Gully. Well, you've got it. Your face. It—" Jisbella began to laugh hysterically. "You'll have to learn control now, Gully. You'll never be able to give way to emotion—any emotion—because—"

BUT he was staring past her and suddenly he shot up the aluminum shaft with a yell. He jerked to a stop before an open door and began to whoop in triumph. The door opened into a tool locker, four by four by nine. There were shelves in the locker and a jumble of old provisions and discarded containers. It was Foyle's coffin aboard the *Nomad*.

Joseph and his People had succeeded in sealing the wreck into their asteroid before the holocaust of Foyle's escape had rendered further work impossible. The interior of the ship was virtually untouched. Foyle took Jisbella's arm and dragged her on a quick tour of the ship and finally to the purser's locker, where Foyle tore at the windrows of wreckage and debris until he disclosed a massive steel face, blank and impenetrable.

"We've got a choice," he panted. "Either we tear the safe out of the hull and carry it back to Terra where we can work on it, or we open it here. I vote for here. Maybe Dagenham was lying. All depends on what tools Sam has in the Weekender, anyway. Come back to the ship, Jiz."

He never noticed her silence and preoccupation until they were back aboard the Weekender and he had finished his urgent search for tools.

"Nothing!" he snarled impa-

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tiently. "There isn't a hammer or a drill aboard. Nothing but gadgets for opening bottles and rations."

Jisbella didn't answer. She didn't take her eyes off his face.

"Why are you staring at me like that?" Foyle demanded.

"I'm fascinated," Jisbella answered slowly.

"By what?"

"I'm going to show you something, Gully."

"What?"

"How much I despise you."

Jisbella slapped him twice. Stung by the blows, Foyle started up in fury. Jisbella picked up a hand mirror and held it before him.

"Look at yourself, Gully," she said quietly. "Look at your face."

He looked. He saw the old tattoo marks flaming blood-red under the skin, turning his face into a scarlet and white tiger mask. He was so chilled by the appalling spectacle that his rage died at once—and the mask disappeared just as swiftly.

"Lord!" he whispered. "Lord, Lord!"

"I had to make you lose your temper to show you," Jisbella said.

"What's it mean, Jiz? Did Baker goof the job?"

"I don't think so. I think you've got scars under the skin, Gully—first from the tattooing and then from the bleaching. Needle scars. They don't show normally, but they do when your emotions take over and your heart begins pumping blood . . . when you're furious or frightened or passionate or possessed. Do you understand?"

HE SHOOK his head, still staring at his face, touching it in bewilderment.

"You said you wished you could carry me in your pocket to stick pins in you when you lose control. You've got something better than that, Gully, or worse, poor darling. You've got your face."

"No!" he said. "No!"

"You can't ever lose control, Gully. You'll never be able to drink too much, eat too much, love too much, hate too much. You'll have to hold yourself with an iron grip."

"No!" he insisted desperately. "It can be fixed. Baker can do it, or somebody else. I can't walk around afraid to feel anything because it'll turn me into a freak!"

"I don't think this can be fixed, Gully."

"Skin-graft."

"The scars are too deep for graft. You'll never get rid of this stigmata, Gully. You'll have to learn to live with it."

Foyle flung the mirror from

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him in sudden rage, and again the blood-red mask flared up under his skin. He lunged out of the main cabin to the main hatch, where he pulled his spacesuit down and began to squirm into it.

"Gully! Where are you going? What are you going to do?"

"Get tools," he shouted. "Tools for the safe."

"Where?"

"In the asteroid. They've got dozens of warehouses stuffed with tools from wrecked ships. There have to be drills there; everything I need. Don't come with me. There may be trouble. How is my lousy face now? Showing it? I hope there *is* trouble!"

He corked his suit and went into the asteroid. He found a hatch separating the inhabited core from the outer void. He banged on the door. He waited and banged again until at last the hatch was opened. Arms reached out and yanked him in, and the hatch was closed behind him. It had no airlock.

He blinked in the light and scowled at J♂seph and his innocent People gathering before him, their faces hideously decorated. And he knew that his own face must be flaming red and white, for he saw J♂seph start, and he saw the devil-mouth shape the syllables:

Nomad.

FOYLE strode through the crowd, scattering them brutally. He smashed J♂seph with a backhand blow from his gauntleted fist. He searched through the inhabited corridors, recognizing them dimly, and he came at last to the chamber, half natural cave, half antique hull, where the tools were stored.

He rooted and ferreted, gathering up drills, diamond bits, acids, thermites, dynamite jellies, fuses. In the gently revolving asteroid, the gross weight of the equipment was reduced to less than a hundred pounds. He lumped it into a mass, roughly bound it together with cable and started out of the store-cave.

J♂seph and his Scientific People were waiting for him, like fleas waiting for a wolf. They darted at him and he battered through them, harried, delighted, savage. The armor of his spacesuit protected him from their attacks and he went down the passages searching for a hatch that would lead out into the void.

Jisbella's voice came to him, tinny on the earphones and agitated: "Gully, can you hear me? This is Jiz. Gully, listen to me."

"Go ahead."

"Another ship came up two minutes ago. It's drifting on the other side of the asteroid."

"What!"

"It's marked with yellow and

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black colors, like a hornet."

"Dagenham's colors!"

"Then we've been followed."

"Dagenham's probably had a fix on me ever since we busted out of Gouffre Martel. I was a fool not to think of it. We've got to work fast, Jiz. Cork up in a suit and meet me aboard *Nomad*. The purser's room. Go, girl!"

"But, Gully—"

"Sign off. They may be monitoring our waveband. Go!"

He drove through the asteroid, reached a barred hatch, broke through the guard before it, smashed it open and went into the void of the outer passages. The Scientific People were too desperate getting the hatch closed to stop him. But he knew they would follow him; they were raging.

He hauled the bulk of his equipment through twists and turns to the wreck of the *Nomad*. Jisbella was waiting for him in the purser's room.

SHE made a move to turn on her micro-wave set and Foyle stopped her. He placed his helmet against hers and shouted: "No short-wave. They'll be monitoring and they'll locate us by D/F. You can hear me like this, can't you?"

She nodded.

"All right. We've got maybe an hour before Dagenham finds us. We've got maybe an hour before Joseph and his mob come after us. We're in a hell of a jam. We've got to work fast.

She nodded again.

"No time to open the safe and transport the bullion."

"If it's there."

"Dagenham's here, isn't he? That's proof it's there. We'll have to cut the whole safe out of the *Nomad* and get it into the Weekender. Then we blast."

"But—"

"Just listen to me and do what I say. Go back to the Weekender. Empty it out. Jettison everything we don't need—all supplies except emergency rations."

"Why?"

"Because I don't know how many tons this safe weighs and the ship may not be able to handle it when we come back to gravity. We've got to make allowances in advance. It'll mean a tough trip back, but it's worth it. Strip the ship. Fast! Go, girl. Go!"

He pushed her away and, without another glance in her direction, attacked the safe. It was built into the structural steel of the hull, a massive metal ball some four feet in diameter. It was welded to the strakes and ribs of the *Nomad* at twelve different spots. Foyle hit each weld in turn with acids, drills, thermite and refrigerants. He was operating on the theory of structural

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strain—to heat, freeze and etch the steel until its crystalline structure was distorted and its physical strength destroyed. He was fatiguing the metal.

Jisbella returned and he realized that forty-five minutes had passed. He was dripping and shaking, but the globe of the safe hung free of the hull with a dozen rough knobs protruding from its surface. Foyle motioned urgently to Jisbella and she strained her weight against the safe with him. They could not budge its mass together.

As they sank back in exhaustion and despair, a quick shadow eclipsed the sunlight pouring through the rents in the *Nomad* hull. They stared up.

A spaceship was circling the asteroid less than a quarter of a mile off.

FOYLE placed his helmet against Jisbella's. "Dagenham," he gasped. "Looking for us. Probably got a crew down here combing for us, too. Soon as they talk to Joseph, they'll be here."

"Oh, Gully!"

"We've still got a chance. Maybe they won't spot Sam's Weekender until they've made a couple of revolutions. It's hidden in that crater. Maybe we can get the safe aboard in the meantime."

"How?"

"I don't know, damn it! I don't know." He pounded his fists together in frustration. "I'm finished."

"Couldn't we blast it out?"

"Blast? Bombs instead of brains? Is this Mental McQueen speaking?"

"Listen. Blast it with something explosive. That would act like a rocket jet—give it a thrust."

"But then what? How do we get it into the ship, Jiz? Can't keep on blasting. Haven't got time."

"No, we bring the ship to the safe."

"What?"

"Blast the safe straight out into space. Then bring the ship around and let the safe sail right into the main hatch. Like catching a ball in your hat. See?"

He saw. "Hey, we can do it!" Foyle leaped to the pile of equipment and began sorting out sticks of dynamite gelatine, fuses and caps.

"We'll have to use the short-wave. One of us stays with the safe; one of us pilots the ship. One with the safe talks the one with the ship into position. Right?"

"Right. You'd better pilot, Gully. I'll do the talking."

He nodded, fixing explosive to the face of the safe, attaching caps and fuses. Then he placed his helmet against hers. "Vacuum fuses, Jiz. Timed for two min-

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utes. When I give the word by short-wave, just pull off the fuse heads and get out of the way. Right?"

"Right."

"Stay with the safe. Once you've talked it into the ship, come right after it. Don't wait for anything. It's going to be close."

He thumped her shoulder and returned to the Weekender. He left the outer hatch open, and the inner door of the airlock as well. The ship's air puffed out immediately. Airless and stripped by Jisbella, it looked dismal and forlorn.

Foyle went directly to the controls, sat down and switched on his micro-wave set. "Stand by. I'm coming out now."

HE IGNITED the jets, blew the laterals for three seconds and then the forwards. The Weekender lifted easily, shaking debris from her back and sides like a whale surfacing.

As she slid up and back, Foyle called: "Dynamite, Jiz! Now!"

There was no blast; there was no flash. In the silence of space, a new crater opened in the asteroid below him and a flower of rubble sprang upward, rapidly outdistancing a dull steel ball that followed leisurely, turning in a lazy spin.

"Ease off." Jisbella's voice came cold and competent over the earphones. "You're backing too fast. And incidentally, trouble's arrived."

He braked with the rear jets, looking down in alarm. The surface of the asteroid was covered with a swarm of hornets. They were Dagenham's crew in yellow and black banded spacesuits. They were buzzing around a single figure in white that dodged and spun and eluded them. It was Jisbella.

"Steady as you go," Jiz said quietly, although he could hear how hard she was breathing. "Ease off a little more . . . Roll a quarter turn."

He obeyed her almost automatically, still watching the struggle below. The flank of the Weekender cut off any view of the trajectory of the safe as it approached him, but he could still see Jisbella and Dagenham's men.

She ignited her suit rocket—he saw the tiny spurt of flame shoot out from her back—and came sailing up from the surface of the asteroid. A score of flames burst out from the backs of Dagenham's men as they followed. Half a dozen dropped the pursuit of Jisbella and came up after the Weekender.

"It's going to be close, Gully." Jisbella was panting now, but her voice was still calm. "Dagen-

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ham's ship came down on the other side, but they've probably signaled him by now and he'll be on his way. Hold your position, Gully. About ten seconds now . . ."

The hornets closed in and engulfed the tiny white suit.

"Foyle! Can you hear me? Foyle!" Dagenham's voice came in fuzzily and finally cleared. "This is Dagenham calling on your band. Come in, Foyle!"

"Jiz! Jiz! Can you get clear of them?"

"Hold your position, Gully . . . There she goes! It's a hole in one, son!"

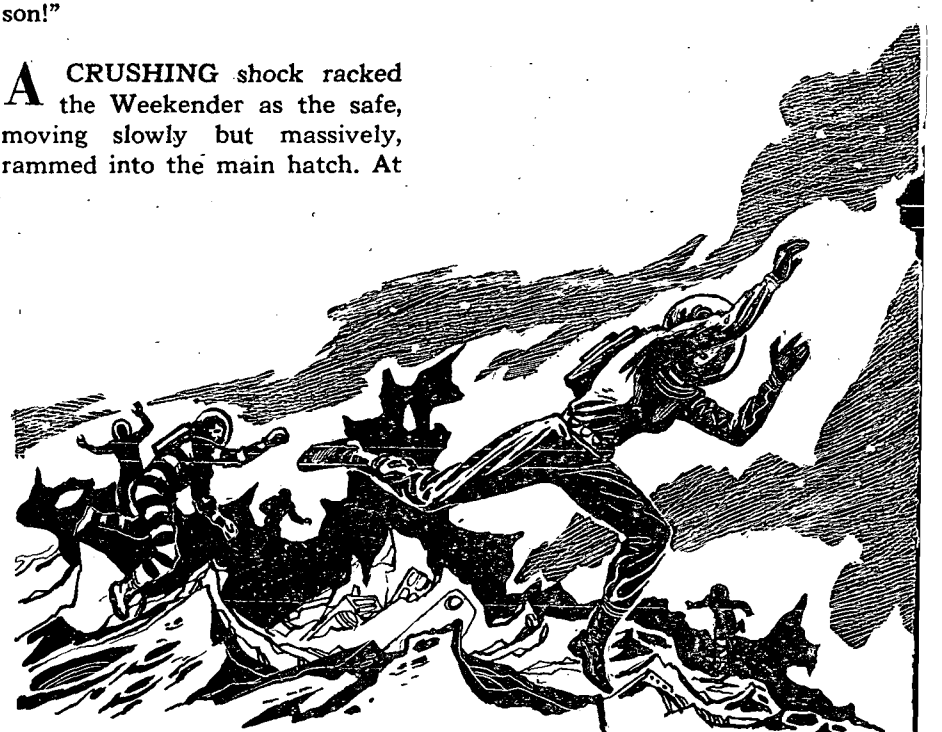
A CRUSHING shock racked the Weekender as the safe, moving slowly but massively, rammed into the main hatch. At the same moment, the white-suited figure broke out of the cluster of yellow wasps. It came rocketing up to the Weekender, hotly pursued.

"Come on, Jiz! Come on!" Foyle howled. "Come, girl! Come!"

As Jisbella disappeared from sight behind the flank of the Weekender, Foyle set controls and prepared for top acceleration.

"Foyle! Will you answer me? This is Dagenham speaking."

"Speak your head off, Dagenham," Foyle shouted. "Give me



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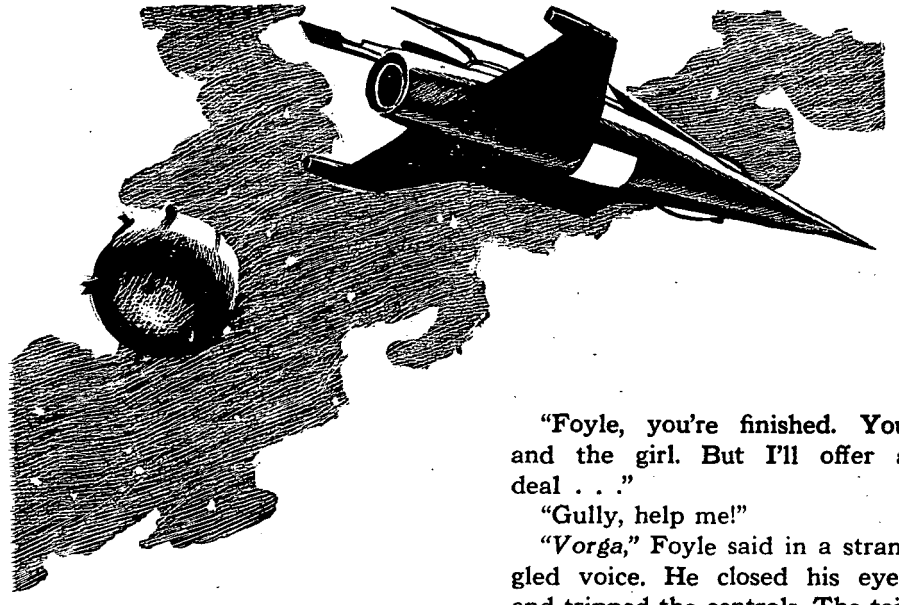

the word when you're aboard, Jiz, and hold on."

"I can't make it, Gully."

"Come on, girl!"

"I can't get aboard. The safe's blocking the hatch. It's wedged in halfway."

"Jiz!"

"There's no way in, I tell you," she cried in despair. "I'm blocked out."

He stared around wildly. Dagenham's men were boarding the hull of the Weekender with the menacing purpose of professional raiders. Dagenham's ship was lifting over the brief horizon of the asteroid on a dead course for him.

"Foyle, you're finished. You and the girl. But I'll offer a deal . . ."

"Gully, help me!"

"Vorga," Foyle said in a strangled voice. He closed his eyes and tripped the controls. The tail jets roared. The Weekender shook and shuddered forward. It broke free of Dagenham's boarders, of Jisbella, of warnings and pleas. It pressed Foyle back into the pilot's chair with the blackout of 10G acceleration, an acceleration that was less pressing, less painful, less treacherous than the passion that drove him.

And as he passed from sight, there rose up on his face the blood-red stigmata of his possession.

8

With a heart of furious fancies
Whereof I am commander,

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With a burning spear and a horse of air,
To the wilderness I wander.

With a knight of ghosts and shadows
I summoned am to tourney,
Ten leagues beyond the wide world's end—
Methinks it is no journey.
Tom-a-Bedlam

THE old year soured as pestilence poisoned the planets. The war gained momentum and grew from a distant affair of romantic raids and skirmishes in space to a holocaust in the making.

It soon became evident that the last of the World Wars was done and the first of the Solar Wars had begun.

The belligerents slowly massed men and materiél for the havoc. The Outer Satellites introduced universal conscription and the Inner Planets perforce followed suit. Industries, trades, sciences, skills and professions were drafted; regulations and oppressions followed. The armies and navies requisitioned and commanded.

Commerce obeyed, for this was the shooting phase of a commercial struggle. But populations rebelled and draft-jaunting and labor-jaunting became critical problems. Spy scares and invasion scares spread. The hysterical became informers and lynchers. An ominous foreboding paralyzed every home from Baffin Island to the Falklands. The dying year was enlivened only by the advent of the Four Mile Circus.

This was the popular nickname for the grotesque entourage of Geoffrey Fourmyle of Ceres, a wealthy young buffoon from the largest of the asteroids. Fourmyle of Ceres was enormously rich; he was also enormously amusing. He was the classic *nouveau riche* of all time. His entourage was a cross between a country circus and the comic court of a Bulgarian kinglet, as witness this typical arrival in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Early in the morning, a lawyer, wearing the stovepipe hat of a legal clan, appeared with a list of camp sites in his hand and a small fortune in his pocket. He settled on a four-acre meadow facing Lake Michigan and rented it for an exorbitant fee.

He was followed by a gang of surveyors from the Mason & Dixon clan. In twenty minutes, the surveyors had laid out a camp site and the word had spread that the Four Mile Circus was arriving. Locals from Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota came to watch the fun.

Twenty roustabouts jaunted in, each carrying a tent-pack on his

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back. There was a mighty overture of bawled orders, shouts, curses, and the tortured scream of compressed air. Twenty giant tents ballooned upward, their lac and latex surfaces gleaming as they dried in the winter sun. The spectators cheered.

A SIX-MOTOR helicopter drifted down and hovered over a giant trampoline. Its belly opened and a cascade of furnishings came down. Servants, valets, chefs and waiters jaunted in. They furnished and decorated the tents. The kitchens began smoking and the odor of frying, broiling and baking pervaded the camp. Fourmyle's private police were already on duty, patrolling the four acres, keeping back the huge crowd of spectators.

Then by plane, by car, by bus, by truck, by bike and by jaunte came Fourmyle's entourage. Librarians and books, scientists and laboratories, philosophers, poets, athletes. Racks of swords and sabers were set up and judo mats and a boxing ring. A fifty-foot pool was sunk in the ground and filled by pump from the lake. An interesting altercation arose between two beefy athletes as to whether the pool should be warmed for swimming or frozen for skating.

Musicians, actors, jugglers and acrobats arrived. The uproar became deafening. A crew of mechanics melted a grease-pit and began revving up Fourmyle's collection of vintage diesel harvesters. Last of all came the camp followers: wives, daughters, mistresses, whores, beggars, chiselers and grafters.

At noon, Fourmyle of Ceres arrived with a display of conspicuous transportation so outlandish that it had been known to make seven-year melancholics laugh. A giant amphibian thrummed up from the south and landed on the lake. A landing barge emerged from the plane and droned across the water to the shore. Its forward wall banged down into a drawbridge and out came a 20th century staff car. Wonder piled on wonder for the delighted spectators, for the staff car drove a matter of twenty yards to the center of camp and then stopped.

"What can possibly come next? Bike?"

"No, roller-skates."

"He'll come out on a pogo-stick."

FOURMYLE capped their wildest speculations. The muzzle of a circus cannon thrust up from the staff car. There was the bang of a black-powder explosion and Fourmyle of Ceres was shot out of the cannon in a graceful arc to the very door of his tent, where he was caught in

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a net by four valets. The applause that greeted him could be heard for six miles. Fourmyle climbed onto his valets' shoulders and motioned for silence.

"Friends, Romans, Countrymen," Fourmyle began earnestly, "Lend me your ears. Shakespeare. 1564-1616. Damn!" Four white doves shook themselves out of Fourmyle's sleeves and fluttered away.

He regarded them with astonishment, then continued. "Greetings, salutations, *bonjour, bon ton, bon vivant, bon voyage, bon*— What the hell?" Fourmyle's pockets caught fire and rocketed forth Roman candles. He tried to put himself out. Streamers and confetti burst from him. "Friends . . . Shut up! I'll get this speech straight. Quiet! Friends —"

Fourmyle looked down at himself in dismay. His clothes were melting away, revealing lurid scarlet underwear.

"Kleinmann!" he bellowed angrily. "Kleinmann! What's happened to your hypno-training?"

A hairy head thrust out of a tent. "You stoodied for dis sbeech last night, Fourmyle?"

"You bet I stoodied. For two hours, I stoodied. Never took my head out of the hypno-oven. Kleinmann on Prestidigitation."

"No, no, no!" the hairy man bawled. "How many times must I tell you? Prestidigitation is not sbeech-making. Is magic. *Dumbkopf!* You haff the wrong hypnosis taken!"

The scarlet underwear began melting. Fourmyle toppled from the shoulders of his shaking valets and disappeared within his tent. There was a roar of laughter and cheering and the Four Mile Circus ripped into high gear. The kitchens sizzled and smoked. There was a perpetuity of eating and drinking. The music never

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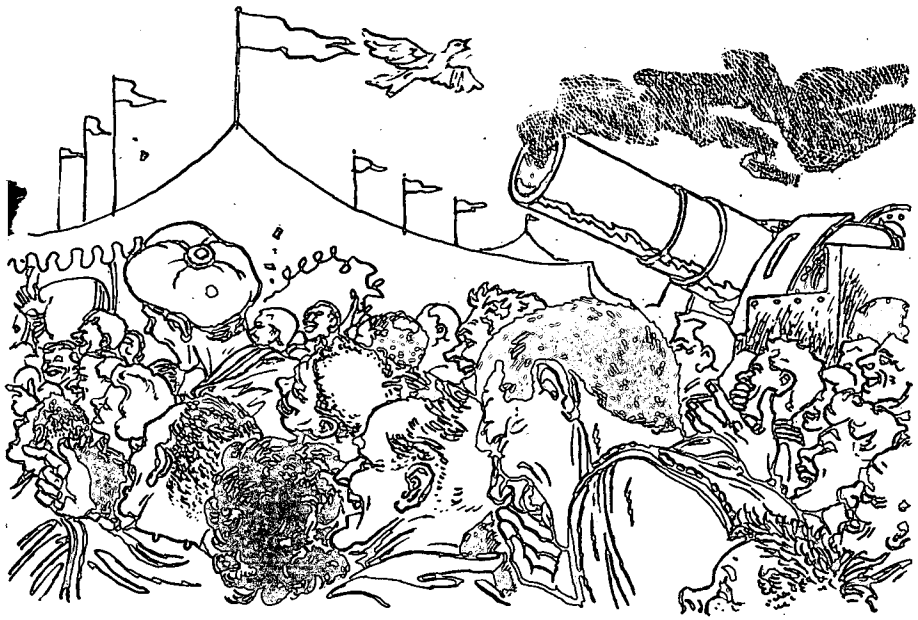
stopped. The vaudeville never ceased.

Inside his tent, Fourmyle changed his clothes, changed his mind, changed again, undressed again, kicked his valets and called for his tailor in a bastard tongue of French, Mayfair and affectation. Halfway into a new suit, he recollected he had neglected to bathe. He slapped his tailor, ordered ten gallons of scent to be decanted into the pool, and was stricken with poetic inspiration. He summoned his resident poet.

"Take this down," Fourmyle commanded. *"Le roi est mort, les*— Wait. What rhymes with Moon?"

"June," his poet suggested. "Croon, soon, dune, loon, noon, rune, tune, boon . . ."

"I forgot my experiment!" Fourmyle exclaimed. "Dr. Bohun! Dr. Bohun!"



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Half-naked, he rushed pell-mell into the laboratory, where he blew himself and Dr. Bohun, his resident chemist, halfway across the tent. As the chemist attempted to raise himself from the floor, he found himself seized in a most painful and embarrassing stranglehold.

"Nogouchi!" Fourmyle shouted. "Hi, Nogouchi! I just invented a new judo hold!"

HE STOOD up, lifted the suffocating chemist and jaunted to the judo mat, where the little Japanese inspected the hold and shook his head.

"No, please." He hissed politely. "Pressure on windpipe are not perpetually lethal. I show you, please." He seized the dazed chemist, whirled him and deposited him on the mat in a position of unbreakable self-strangulation. "You observe, please, Fourmyle?"

But Fourmyle was in the library bludgeoning his librarian over the head with Bloch's *Das Sexual Leben* (eight pounds, nine ounces) because that unhappy man could produce no text on the manufacture of perpetual-motion machines.

He rushed to his physics laboratory, where he destroyed an expensive chronometer to experiment with cog wheels, jaunted to the bandstand, where he seized a baton and led the orchestra into confusion, put on skates and fell into the scented swimming pool, was hauled out, swearing fulminously at the lack of ice.

"I wish to commute with myself," Fourmyle said, kicking his valets in all directions. He was snoring before the last of them limped to the door and closed it behind him.

The snoring stopped and Foyle arose. "That ought to hold them for today," he muttered, and went into his dressing room. He stood before a mirror, took a deep breath and held it, meanwhile watching his face. At the expiration of one minute, it was still unmarred. He continued to hold his breath, maintaining rigid control over pulse and muscle, mastering the strain with iron calm. At two minutes and twenty seconds, the stigmata appeared, blood-red.

Foyle let out his breath. The tiger mask faded.

"Better," he murmured. "Much better. The old fakir was right — Yoga is the answer. Control. Pulse, breath, bowels, brains."

He stripped and examined his body. He was in magnificent condition, but his skin still showed delicate silver seams in a network from neck to ankles. It looked as though someone had carved an outline of the nervous system into Foyle's flesh. The silver seams were the scars of an operation that had not yet faded.

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THAT operation had cost a Cr 200,000 bribe to the chief surgeon of the Mars Commando Brigade and had transformed Foyle into an extraordinary fighting machine. Every nerve plexus had been rewired, microscopic transistors and transformers had been buried in muscle and bone, a minute platinum outlet showed at the base of his spine. To this, Foyle affixed a power-pack the size of a pea and switched it on. His body began an internal electronic vibration that was almost mechanical.

"More machine than man," he thought. He dressed, rejected the extravagant apparel of Fourmyle of Ceres for the anonymous black coverall of action.

He jaunted to Robin Wednesbury's apartment in the lonely building amidst the Wisconsin pines. It was the real reason for the advent of the Four Mile Circus in Green Bay. He jaunted and arrived in darkness and empty space and immediately plummeted down.

"Wrong coordinates?" he thought. "Misjaunted?"

The broken end of a rafter dealt him a bruising blow and he landed heavily on a shattered floor upon the putrefying remains of a corpse.

Foyle leaped up in calm revulsion. He pressed hard with his tongue against his right upper first molar. The operation that had transformed half his body into an electronic machine had set the control switchboard in his teeth. Foyle pressed a tooth with his tongue and the peripheral cells of his retina were excited into emitting a soft light. He looked down two pale beams at the corpse of a man.

The corpse lay in the apartment below Robin Wednesbury's flat. It was gutted. Foyle looked up. Above him was a ten-foot hole where the floor of Robin's living room had been. The entire building stank of fire, smoke and rot.

"Jacked," Foyle said softly. "This place has been jacked. What happened?"

The jaunting age had crystallized the hoboes, tramps and vagabonds of the world into a new class. They followed the night from east to west, always in darkness, always in search of loot, the leavings of disaster, carrion. If earthquake shattered a warehouse, they were jacking it the following night. If fire opened a house or explosion split the defenses of a shop, they jaunted in and scavenged. They called themselves Jack-jaunters. They were jackals.

Foyle climbed up through the wreckage to the corridor on the floor above. The Jack-jaunters had a camp there. A whole calf

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roasted before a fire which sparked up to the sky through a gash in the roof. There were a dozen men and three women around the fire, rough, dangerous, jabbering in the rhyming slang of the jackals. They were dressed in mismatched clothes and drinking potato beer from champagne glasses.

AN OMINOUS growl of anger and terror met Foyle's appearance as the big man in black came up through the rubble, his intent eyes emitting pale beams of light. Calmly, he strode through the rising mob to the entrance of Robin Wednesbury's flat. His iron control gave him an air of detachment.

"If she's dead," he thought, "I'm finished. I've got to use her. But if she's dead . . ."

Robin's apartment was gutted like the rest of the building. The living room was an oval of floor around the jagged hole in the center. Foyle searched for a body. Two men and a woman were in the bed in the bedroom. The men cursed. The woman shrieked at the apparition. The men hurled themselves at Foyle.

He backed a step and pressed his tongue against his upper incisors. Neural circuits buzzed and every sense and response in his body was accelerated by a ratio of five.

The effect was an instantaneous reduction of the external world to extreme slow motion. Sound became a deep garble. Color shifted down the spectrum toward the red. The two assailants seemed to float toward him with dreamlike languor.

To the rest of the world, Foyle became a blur of action. He sidestepped the blow inching toward him, walked around the man, raised him and threw him toward the crater in the living room. He threw the second man after the first jackal. To Foyle's accelerated senses, their bodies seemed to drift slowly, still in mid-stride, fists inching forward, open mouths slowly burbling heavy clotted sounds.

Foyle whipped around to the woman cowering in the bed.

"Wsthrabdy?" the blur asked.

The woman shrieked.

Foyle pressed his upper incisors again, cutting off the acceleration. The external world shook itself out of slow motion back to normal. Sound and color leaped up the spectrum and the two jackals disappeared through the crater and crashed into the apartment below.

"Was there a body?" Foyle repeated gently. "A beautiful Negro girl?"

The woman was unintelligible. He took her by the hair and shook her, then hurled her

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through the crater in the living room floor.

His search for a clue to Robin's fate was interrupted by the mob from the hall. They carried torches and makeshift weapons. The Jack-jaunters were not professional killers. They only worried defenseless prey to death.

"Don't bother me," Foyle warned quietly, ferreting intently through closets.

THEY edged closer, goaded by a ruffian in a mink suit and a tricorne hat, and inspired by the curses percolating up from the floor below. The man in the tricorne threw a torch at Foyle.

Foyle accelerated again and the Jack-jaunters were transformed into living statues. Foyle picked up half a chair and calmly clubbed the slow-motion figures. They remained upright. He thrust the man in the tricorne down on the floor and knelt on him. Then he decelerated.

Again the external world came to life. The jackals dropped in their tracks, pole-axed. The man in the tricorne hat and mink suit roared.

"Was there a body in here?" Foyle asked. "Negro girl. Very tall. Very beautiful."

The man writhed and attempted to gouge Foyle's eyes.

"You keep track of bodies," Foyle said. "Some of you Jacks like dead girls better than live ones. Did you find her body in here?"

Receiving no satisfactory answer, he picked up a torch and set fire to the mink suit. He followed the Jack-jaunter into the living room and watched him with detached interest. The man howled, toppled over the edge of the crater and flamed down into the darkness below.

"Was there a body?" Foyle called down. He shook his head at the answer. "Not very deft," he grumbled at himself. "I've got to learn how to extract information. Dagenham could teach me a thing or two."

He poured water down on the man and put out the fire. Then he switched off his electronic system and jaunted.

He appeared in Green Bay, smelling so abominably of singed hair and scorched skin that he entered the local Presteign shop (jewels, perfumes, cosmetics, ionics & surrogates) to buy a deodorant. But the local Mr. Presto had evidently witnessed the arrival of the Four Mile Circus and recognized him.

Foyle at once snapped out of his detached intensity and became the outlandish Fourmyle of Ceres. He clowned and cavorted, bought a twelve-ounce flagon of *Euge No. 5* at Cr 100 an ounce, dabbed himself delicately and

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tossed the bottle into the street to the edification and delight of Mr. Presto.

The Record Clerk at the County Record office was unaware of Foyle's identity and obdurate and uncompromising.

"No, sir. County Records Are not Viewed Without Proper Court Order for Sufficient Cause. That Must Be Final."

Foyle examined him keenly and without rancor. "Asthenic type," he decided. "Slender, long-boned, no strength. Epileptoid character. Self-centered, pedantic, single-minded, shallow. Not bribable; too repressed and strait-laced. But repression's the chink in his armor."

AN HOUR later, six followers from the Four Mile Circus waylaid the Record Clerk. They were of the female persuasion and richly endowed with vice. Two hours later, the Record Clerk, dazed by flesh and the devil, delivered up his information. The apartment building had been opened to Jack-jaunting by a gas explosion two weeks earlier. All tenants had been forced to move. Robin Wednesbury was in protective confinement in Mercy Hospital near the Iron Mountain Proving Grounds.

"Protective confinement?" Foyle wondered. "What for? What's she done?"

It took thirty minutes to organize a Christmas Party in the Four Mile Circus. It was made up of musicians, singers, actors and rabble who knew the Iron Mountain coordinates. Led by their chief buffoon, they jaunted up with music, fireworks, firewater, and gifts. They paraded through the town spreading largess and laughter. They blundered into the radar field of the Proving Ground protection system and were driven out with laughter.

Forumyle of Ceres, dressed as Santa Claus, scattering banknotes from a huge sack over his shoulder and leaping in agony as the induction field of the protection system burned his bottom, made an entrancing spectacle.

They burst into Mercy Hospital, following Santa Claus, who roared and cavorted with the detached calm of a solemn elephant. He kissed the nurses, made drunk the attendants, pestered the patients with gifts, littered the corridors with money, and abruptly disappeared when the happy rioting reached such heights that the police had to be called.

Much later, it was discovered that a patient had disappeared, too, despite the fact that she had been under sedation and was incapable of jaunting. As a matter of fact, she had departed from the hospital inside Santa's sack,

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brought along for that purpose.

Foyle jaunted with her over his shoulder to the hospital grounds. There, in a quiet grove of pines under a frosty sky, he helped her out of the sack. She wore severe white hospital pajamas and was beautiful. He removed his own costume, watching the girl intently, waiting to see if she would recognize and remember him.

She was alarmed and confused; her telesending was like heat-lightning: *"Who is he? What's happened? The music. The uproar. Why kidnaped in a sack? Drunks slurring on trombones. 'Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.' Adeste Fidelis. What's he want from me? Who is he?"*

"I'm Fourmyle of Ceres," Foyle said.

"WHAT? Who? Fourmyle of—? Yes, of course. *The buffoon. The bourgeoise gentilhomme. Vulgarity. Imbecility. Obscenity. The Four Mile Circus.* My God! Am I telesending? Can you hear me?"

"I hear you, Miss Wednesbury," Foyle said quietly.

"What have you done? Why? What do you want with me? I—"

"I want you to look at me."

"Bonjour, Madame. Into my sack, Madame. Ecco! Look at me. I'm looking," Robin said, trying to control the jangle of her thoughts. She gazed up into his face without recognition. *"It's a face. I've seen so many like it. The features of masculinity. Everyman in rut. Will God never save us from brute desire?"*

"My rutting season's over, Miss Wednesbury."

"I'm sorry you heard that. I'm terrified, naturally. I—You know me?"

"I know you."

"We've met before?" She scrutinized him closely, but still without recognition. Deep down inside Foyle there was a surge of triumph. If this woman of all women failed to remember him, he was safe, provided he kept blood and brains and face under control.

"We've never met," he said. "I've heard of you. I want something from you. That's why we're here—to talk about it. If you don't like my offer, you can go back to the hospital."

"You want something? *But I've got nothing. Nothing's left but shame and—Why did the suicide fail? Why couldn't I—"*

"So that's it?" Foyle interrupted softly. "You tried to commit suicide, eh? That accounts for the gas explosion that opened the building, and your protective confinement. Attempted suicide. Why weren't you hurt in the explosion?"

"So many were hurt. So many

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died. But I didn't. I'm unlucky, I suppose. I've been unlucky all my life."

"Why suicide?"

"I'm tired. I'm finished. I've lost everything . . . I'm on the army graylist . . . suspected, watched, reported. No job. No family. No — Why suicide? Dear God, what else but suicide?"

"You can work for me."

"I can . . . What did you say?"

"I want you to work for me, Miss Wednesbury."

SHE burst into hysterical laughter. "For you? *Another camp-follower in the Circus?* Work for you, Fourmyle?"

"You've got sex on the brain," he said gently. "I'm not looking for tarts. They look for me, as a rule."

"I'm sorry. *I'm obsessed by the brute who destroyed me. I* — I'll try to make sense." Robin calmed herself. "Let me understand you. You've taken me out of the hospital to offer me a job. You've heard of me. That means you want something special. My specialty is telesending."

"And charm."

"What?"

"I want to buy your charm, Miss Wednesbury."

"I don't understand."

"Why," Foyle said mildly, "it ought to be simple for you. I'm the buffoon. I'm vulgarity, imbecility, obscenity. That's got to stop. I want you to be my social secretary."

"You expect me to believe that? You could hire a hundred social secretaries . . . a thousand, with your money. You expect me to believe that I'm the only one for you? That you had to kidnap me from protective confinement to get me?"

Foyle nodded. "That's right, there are thousands, but only one that can telesend."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"You're going to be the ventriloquist; I'm going to be your dummy. I don't know the upper classes; you do. They have their own talk, their own jokes, their own manners. If a man wants to be accepted by them, he's got to talk their language. I can't, but you can. You'll talk for me, through my mouth."

"But you could learn."

"It would take too long. And charm can't be learned. I want to buy your charm, Miss Wednesbury. Now about salary — I'll pay you a thousand a month."

Her eyes widened. "You're very generous, Fourmyle."

"I'll clean up this suicide charge for you."

"You're very kind."

"And I'll guarantee to get you off the army graylist. You'll be back on the whitelist by the time you finish working for me. You

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can begin with a clean slate and a bonus. You can start living again."

ROBIN'S lips trembled and then she began to cry. She sobbed and shook and Foyle had to steady her.

"Well?" he asked. "Will you do it?"

She nodded. "You're so kind. It's — I'm not used to kindness any more."

The dull concussion of a distant explosion made Foyle stiffen. "Christ!" he exclaimed in sudden panic. "Another Blue Jaunte. I —"

"No," Robin said. "I don't know what Blue Jaunte is, but that's the Proving Ground. They —"

She looked up at Foyle's face and screamed. The unexpected shock of the explosion and the vivid chain of associations had wrenched loose his iron control. The blood-red scars of tattooing showed under his skin. She stared at him in horror, still screaming.

He touched his face once, then leaped forward and gagged her. Once again he had hold of himself.

"It shows, eh?" he said with a ghastly smile. "Thought I was back in Gouffre Martel listening to a Blue Jaunte. Yes, I'm Foyle. The brute who destroyed you. You had to know, sooner or later, but I'd hoped it would be later. I'm Foyle, back again. Will you be quiet and listen to me?"

She shook her head frantically, trying to struggle out of his grasp. With detached calm, he punched her jaw. Robin sagged. Foyle picked her up, wrapped her in his coat and held her in his arms, waiting for consciousness to return. When he saw her eyelids flutter, he spoke again.

"Don't move or you'll be sick. Maybe I didn't pull that punch enough."

"Brute . . . Beast . . ."

"I could do this the wrong way," he said. "I could blackmail you. I know your mother and sisters are on Callisto, that you're classed as an alien belligerent by association. That puts you on the blacklist, *ipso facto*. Is that right? *Ipso facto*. 'By the very fact.' Latin. You can't trust hypnolearning. I could point out that all I have to do is send anonymous information to Central Intelligence and you wouldn't be just suspect any more. They'd be ripping information out of you inside twelve hours."

HE FELT her shudder. "But I'm not going to do it that way. I'm going to tell you the truth because I want to turn you into a partner. Your mother's in the Inner Planets. She's in the Inner Planets," he repeated. "She

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may be right here on Earth."

"Safe?" she whispered.

"I don't know."

"Put me down."

"You're cold."

"Put me down."

He set her on her feet.

"You destroyed me once," she said in choked tones. "Are you trying to destroy me again?"

"No. Will you listen?"

She nodded.

"I was lost in space. I was dead and rotting for six months. A ship came up that could have saved me. It passed me by. It let me die. A ship named *Vorga*. *Vorga*—T: 1339. Does that mean anything to you?"

"No."

"Jiz McQueen— A friend of mine who's dead now once told me to find out why I was left to rot. That would be the answer to who gave the order. So I started buying information about *Vorga*. Any information."

"What's that to do with my mother?"

"Just listen. Information was tough to buy. The *Vorga* records were removed from the Bo'ness & Uig files. I managed to locate three names . . . three out of a standard crew of four officers and twelve men. Nobody knew anything or nobody would talk. And I found this." Foyle took a silver locket from his pocket and handed it to Robin. "It was pawned by some spaceman off the *Vorga*. That's all I could find out."

Robin uttered a cry and opened the locket with trembling fingers. Inside were her picture and the pictures of two other girls. As the locket was opened, the 3D photos smiled and whispered: "Love from Robin, Mama . . . Love from Holly, Mama . . . Love from Wendy, Mama."

"It is my mother's," Robin wept. "It . . . She . . . For pity's sake, where is she? What happened?"

"I don't know," Foyle said steadily. "But I can guess. I think your mother got out of that concentration camp . . . one way or another."

"And my sisters, too. She'd never leave them."

"Maybe your sisters, too. I think *Vorga* was running refugees out of Callisto. Your family paid with money and jewelry to get aboard and be taken to the Inner Planets. That's how a spaceman off the *Vorga* came to pawn this locket."

"Then where are they?"

FOYLE shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe they were dumped on Mars or Venus. Most probably they were sold to a labor camp on the Moon, which is why they haven't been able to get in touch with you. I don't

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know where they are, but *Vorga* can tell us."

"Are you lying, tricking me?"

"Is that locket a lie? I'm telling the truth—all the truth I know. I want to find out why they left me to die and who gave the order. The man who gave the order will know where your mother and sisters are. He'll tell you . . . before I kill him. He'll have plenty of time. He'll be a long time dying."

Robin looked at him in horror. The passion that gripped him was making his face once again show the scarlet stigmata. He looked like a tiger closing in for the kill.

"I've got a fortune to spend. Never mind how I got it. I've got three months to finish the job. I've learned enough math to compute the probabilities. Three months is the outside before they figure that Fourmyle of Ceres is Gully Foyle. Ninety days. From New Year's to All Fools. Will you join me?"

"You?" Robin cried with loathing. "Join you?"

"All this Four Mile Circus is camouflage. Nobody ever suspects a clown. But I've been studying, learning, preparing for the finish. All I need now is you."

"Why?"

"I don't know where the hunt is going to lead me—society or slums. I've got to be prepared for both. The slums I can handle alone; I haven't forgotten the gutter. But I need you for society. Will you come in with me?"

"You're hurting me." Robin wrenched her arm out of Foyle's grasp.

"Sorry. I lose control when I think about *Vorga*. Will you help me find *Vorga* and your family?"

"I hate you," Robin burst out. "I despise you. You're rotten. You destroy everything you touch. Someday I'll pay you back."

"But we work together from New Year's to All Fools?"

"We work together," she said venomously.

— ALFRED BESTER

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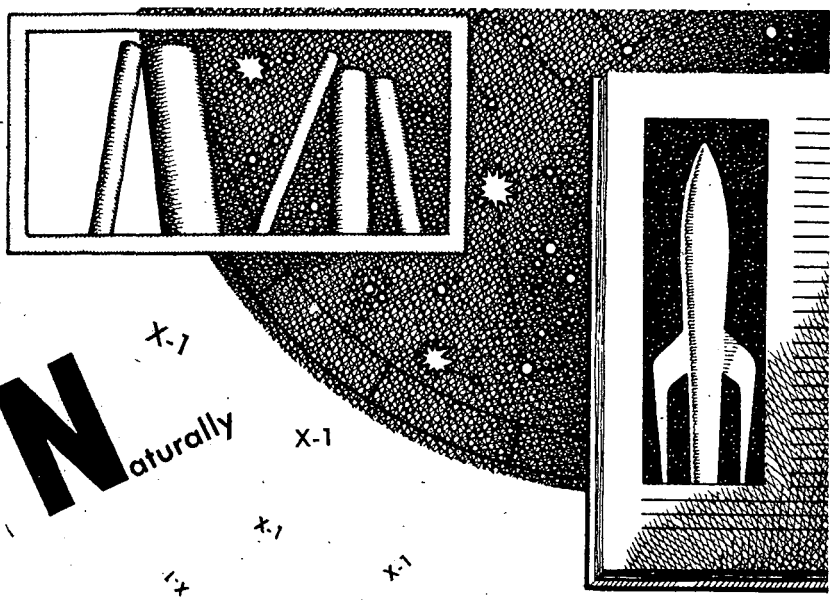

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